A DISCOURSE

Concerning

{Evangelical Love, Church-Peace, & Unity.}

With the

OCCASIONS & REASONS of present *Differences* and *Diviſions* about Things Sacred and Religious.

By *John Owen*, D. D.

Speciosum quidem nomen eſt Pacis, & pulchra opinio Unitatis: ſed quis ambigat eam ſolam unicam Eccleſiæ Pacem eſſe quæ Chriſti eſt? Hilar.

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A DISCOURSE CONCERNING Christian *Love* and *Peace*.

CHAP. I.

Complaints of want of Love and Unity among Christians, how to be managed, and whence fruitless. Charge of Guilt on some, why now remov'd; and for whose sakes. Personal miscarriages of any not excused. Those who manage the Charge mentioned not agreed.

THE great *Differences* that are in the world amongst Professors of the Gospel about things relating to the Worship of God, do exercise more or less the minds of the Generality of men of all sorts: For either in *themselves*, or their *Consequents*, they are looked on to be of great importance. Some herein regard principally that disadvantageous influence which they are supposed to have into mens *spiritual and*

Eternal Concernments: Others, that Aſpect which they fancy them to have upon the *Publick Peace* and tranquility of this world. Hence in all Ages ſuch diviſions have cauſed *great thoughts of heart*; eſpecially becauſe it is very difficult to make a right judgement either of their Nature, or their Tendency. But generally by all they are looked on as *evil*; by ſome, for what they are in themſelves; by others, from the diſadvantage which they bring (as they ſuppoſe) unto their ſecular intereſt. Hence there are amongſt many great *Complaints* of them, and of that want of *Love* which is looked on as their cauſe. And indeed it ſeems not only to be in the *Liberty*, but to be the *Duty* of every man ſoberly to complain of the Evils which he would, but cannot remedy. For ſuch complaints teſtifying a Senſe of their *Evil*, and a deſire of their *Cure*, can be no more than what Love unto the Publick Good requireth of us. And if in any caſe this may be allowed, it muſt be ſo in that of *Diviſions* about ſacred things, or the worſhip of God, with their cauſes and manner of mannagement amongſt men. For it will be granted that the Glory of God, the Honour of Chriſt, the Progreſs of the Goſpel, with the Edification and peace of the Church, are deeply *concerned* in them, and highly *prejudiced* by them. And in theſe things all men have, if not an *equal*, yet ſuch a *ſpecial* intereſt, as none can forbid them the due conſideration of.

Judges 5. 15.

of. No man therefore ought to be judged as though he did *tranſgreſs his Rule*, or goe beyond his Line, who ſoberly expreſſeth his ſenſe of their Evil, and of the Calamities wherewith they are attended. Yet muſt it not be denyed, but that much *Prudence* and moderation is required unto the due management of ſuch *Complaints*. For thoſe which either conſiſt in, or are accompanyed with *Invectives* againſt the Perſons or ways of others, inſtead of a Rational diſcourſe of the cauſes of ſuch Diviſions, and their Remedies, do not only open, enflame and irritate former wounds, but prove matters of new contention and ſtrife, to their great increaſe. Beſides in the manifold Diviſions and Differences of this nature amongſt us, all men are ſuppoſed to be under an adherence unto ſome one *Party* or other. Herein every Man ſtands at the ſame *Diſtance* from others, as they do for him. Now all *complaints* of this kind, carry along with them a tacit Juſtification of thoſe by whom they are made. For no man can be ſo profligate as to judge himſelf and the way of Religious worſhip wherein he is ingaged, to be the cauſe of *blameable Diviſions* amongſt Chriſtians, and yet continue therein: Reflections therefore of *Guilt* upon others, they are uſually repleniſhed withall. But if thoſe are not attended with evident Light and unavoidable *Conviction*, becauſe they proceed from Perſons, ſuppoſed not indifferent, yea culpable in this very

matter more or leſs themſelves, by them whom they reflect upon, they are generally turned into Occaſions of new exaſperations and conteſts. And hence it is come to paſs, that although all good men do on all occaſions bewail the *want of Love*, forbearance and condeſcention, that is found among Profeſſors of the Goſpel, and the *Diviſions* which follow thereon, yet no comfortable nor advantagious effects do thence enſue. Yea not only is all Expectation of that bleſſed fruit, which a general ſerious conſent unto ſuch *Complaints* might produce, as yet utterly fruſtrated; but the ſmall remainders of Love and Peace amongſt us are hazzarded and impaired, by mutual charges of the want and loſs of them, on the Principles and Practices of each other. We have therefore need of no ſmall *Watchfulneſs* and care, leaſt in this matter it fall out with us, as it did with the *Iſraelites* of old, in another occaſion. For when they had by a ſinful ſedition caſt out *David* from amongſt them, and from reigning over them; after a little while, ſeeing their folly and iniquity, they aſſembled together with one conſent to bring him home again. But in the very beginning of their indeavours to this purpoſe, falling into a diſpute about which of the *Tribes* had the *greateſt intereſt* in him, they not only deſiſted from their firſt deſign, but fell into another diſtemper of no leſs dangerous importance then what they were newly delivered from. It muſt be acknowledged

2 *Sam.* 19. 41, 42, 43.

knowledged that there hath been a *ſinful decay of Love* amongſt Profeſſors of the Goſpel in this Nation, if not a violent caſting of it out, by ſuch prejudices and corrupt Affections, as wherewith it is wholly inconſiſtent. And it would be a matter of no ſmall lamentation, if upon the blooming of a deſign for its Recovery and Reduction, with all its trains, as *forbearance, Condeſcention, Gentleneſs* and *Peace*, if any ſuch deſign there be, by conteſts about the occaſions and cauſes of its Abſence, with too much ſeriouſneſs in our own vindication, and pleas of a *ſpecial Intereſt in it* above others, new diſtempers ſhould be raiſed, hazzarding its everlaſting excluſion.

In this ſtate of things we have hitherto contented our ſelves with the *Teſtimony of our own hearts* unto the ſincerity of our deſires, as to walk in Love and Peace with all Men, ſo to exerciſe the fruits of them on all occaſions adminiſtred unto us. And as this alone we have thus far oppoſed unto all thoſe Cenſures and Reproaches which we have undergone to the contrary; ſo therewithall have we ſupported our ſelves under *other things*, which we have alſo ſuffered. Farther to declare our thoughts and Principles in and about the worſhip of God, than they are evidenced and teſtified unto, by our *Practice*, we have hitherto forborne; leaſt the moſt moderate claims of an *eſpecial intereſt* in the common Faith and Love of Chriſtians, ſhould

occaſion new conteſts and troubles unto our ſelves and others. And we have obſerved, that ſometimes an *over-haſty indeavour* to extinguiſh flames of this nature, hath but increaſed and diffuſed them; when perhaps if left alone, their *fewel* would have failed, and themſelves expired. Beſides, a *peaceable practice*, eſpecially if accompanyed with a quiet baring of injuries, gives a greatet conviction to unprejudiced minds, of peaceable principles and inclinations, than any *verbal declaration*, whoſe ſincerity is continually obnoxious to the blaſt of evil Surmiſes. In a Reſolution therefore to the ſame purpoſe we had ſtill continued, had we not ſo openly and frequently been called on, either to vindicate our *Innocency*, or to confeſs and acknowledge our *Evil*. One of theſe we hope is the aim and tendency of all thoſe charges or Accuſations, for want of Love, peaceableneſs, and due compliance with others, of being the Authors and fomentors of *Schiſms* and diviſions, that have been publiſhed againſt us, on the account of our diſſent from ſome Conſtitutions of the *Church of England*. For we do not think that any good men, can pleaſe themſelves, in meerly *accuſing their Brethren*, whereby they add to the weight of their preſent troubles, and evidently expoſe them unto more. For every charge of *Guilt* on thoſe who are already under ſufferings, gives new incouragement and fierceneſs to the minds of them from whom they ſuffer. And as no greater

greater incouragement can be given unto men to *proceed* in any way wherein they are ingaged, then by their Juſtification in what they have already done; ſo the only juſtification of thoſe who have ſtirred up Perſecution againſt others, conſiſts in charging *Guilt* on them that are Perſecuted. As therefore we ſhall readily acknowledge any *Evil* in our Perſons, Principles or ways, which we are, or may be convinced of; So the ſober vindication of Truth and Innocency, that none of the ways of God be evil ſpoken of by reaſon of us, is a Duty, in the care whereof we are no leſs concerned. Yea did we deſign and directly indeavour our *own Juſtification*, we ſhould do no more than the prime dictates of the Law of Nature, and the Example of ſome of the beſt of Men, will give us a ſufficient warrant for. Beſides the clearing of *Private Perſons*, eſpecially if they are many, from undue charges and falſe accuſations, belongs unto *publick Good*; that thoſe who have the Adminiſtration of it committed unto them, may not be miſled to make a wrong Judgment concerning what they have to do; as *David* was in the Caſe of *Mephiboſheth* upon the falſe ſuggeſtions of *Ziba*. Neither could we be juſtly blamed ſhould we be more than ordinarily *urgent* herein; conſidering how prone the Ears of Men are to receive calumnious Accuſations concerning ſuch as from whom they expect neither Profit nor Advantage; and how ſlow in giving admit- 2 *Sam.* 16. 4.

tance to an addreſs of the moſt modeſt defenſative. But this is the leaſt part of our preſent Deſign. Our onely aim is to declare thoſe *Principles* concerning mutual *Love* and Unity among Chriſtians, and Practices in the Worſhip of God, wherein our own Conſciences do find Reſt and Peace, and others have ſo much misjudged us about. This therefore we ſhall briefly do; and that without ſuch Reflexions or *Recriminations*, as may any way exaſperate the Spirits of others, or in the leaſt impede that *Reintroduction* of Love and Concord, which it is the Duty of us all to labour in. Wherefore we ſhall herein have *no regard* unto the Revilings, Reproaches, and threatnings of them, who ſeem to have had no regard to Truth, or Modeſty, or Sobriety, indeed to God or Man, in the mannagement of them. With ſuch it is our Duty *not to ſtrive*, but to commit our cauſe to him that Judgeth Righteouſly, eſpecially with reſpect unto thoſe impure outrages *which goe before unto Judgment*. Furious Perſons, animated by their ſecular Intereſts, or deſire of Revenge, unacquainted with the Spirit of the Goſpel, and the true nature of the Religion revealed by Jeſus Chriſt, incompaſſionate towards the Infirmities of the minds of Men, whereof yet none in the world give greater Inſtances than *themſelves*, who have no thoughts but to trample under foot and deſtroy all that differ from them, we ſhall rather pitty and pray for,

then

then either contend withal, or hope to convince. Such they are, as if outward prevalency were added to their Principles and deſires, they would render all Chriſtians like the *Moabites*, *Ammonites*, and *Edomites*, who came out to fight againſt *Judah*. The two greater Parties upon ſome difference or diſtaſte, conſpire at firſt to deſtroy the *Inhabitants of Seir*; not doubting but that when they had diſpatched them out of the way, they ſhould accord well enough among themſelves: But the Event deceived their Expectation; their *Rage* ceaſed not untill iſſued in the mutual deſtruction of them all. No otherwiſe would it be with thoſe who want nothing but *force* or opportunity to exterminate their next diſſenters in matters of Religion. For when they had accompliſhed that deſign, the ſame Principle and *Rage* would arm them to the waſting of the reſidue of Chriſtians, or their own. For a conceit of the *Lawfulneſs* hereof, is raiſed from a deſire of enlarging power and dominion, which is boundleſs. Eſpecially is it ſo, where an Empire over the *Reaſon*, Faith and Conſciences of men is affected; which firſt produced the fatal Engine of *Papal Infallibility*; that nothing alſo could have ſtrained the wit of man to invent, and nothing leſs can ſupport. Unto ſuch as theſe we ſhall not ſo much as tender ſatisfaction, untill they are capable of receiving the advice of the Apoſtle, *Eph.* 4. 31. *Let all bitterneſs, and wrath, and anger, and*

2 *Chron.* 20. 23.

and clamour, and Evil ſpeaking, be put away from you, with all Malice. For untill this be done, men are to be eſteemed but as *raging waves of the Sea, foaming out their own ſhame*, whom it is to no purpoſe to ſeek to pacifie, much leſs to contend withall.

It is for the Sake of them alone who really value and eſteem, *Love*, Peace, and Unity among Chriſtians for themſelves, that we here tender an account of our thoughts and Principles concerning them. For even of them there are ſome who *unduely charge* us with owning of Principles, deſtructive unto Chriſtian *Love* and Condeſcention, and ſuited to perpetuate the *Schiſms* and Diviſions that are amongſt us. Whether this hath been occaſioned by an over-valuation of their *own Apprehenſions*, conceiting that their judgments ought to give Rule and meaſure to other mens; or whether they have been, it may be inſenſibly unto themſelves, byaſſed by *Provocations* as they ſuppoſe unjuſtly given them, we are not out of hopes but that they may be convinced of their miſtakes. Upon their *Indications* we have ſearched our *Conſciences*, Principles, and Practices, to find whether there be any ſuch way of perverſeneſs in them, as we are charged withall; and may with confidence ſay, that we have a *Diſcharge* from thence, where we are principally concerned. Having therefore ſatisfied that Duty which on this occaſion was in the firſt place incumbent on us

We ſhall now for their *Satisfaction*, and our own *Vindication* with all impartial Men, declare what are our thoughts and Judgments, what are our Principles, ways, and Practices, in and about the great concerns of Chriſtian Love, Unity, and Peace; referring the final deciſion of all differences, unto him, who *hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the World in Righteouſneſs, by the Man whom he hath ordained.*

This being our preſent Deſign, none may expect, that we ſhould attempt to juſtifie or excuſe, any of thoſe *miſcarriages* or failings that are charged on *ſome*, or *all* of thoſe Profeſſors of the Goſpel, who at this Day come not up unto full Communion with the *Church of England.* For we know that *no man liveth and ſinneth not*; yea that in *many things we all offend.* We all know but in part, and are liable to manifold Temptations, even all ſuch as are common unto Men. Thoſe only we have no eſteem of, who through the feaver of Pride have loſt the Underſtanding of their own weak, frail, and ſinful condition. And we do acknowledge, that there are amongſt us, *Sins againſt the Lord our God*, for which he might not only give us up unto the Reproaches and Wrath of Men in this World, but himſelf alſo caſt us off utterly and for ever. We ſhall not therefore in the leaſt *complain* of thoſe who have moſt induſtriouſly repreſented unto the publick view of the world, the weakneſs and

miſcarriages, that have really fallen out amongſt ſome or more of them whoſe Cauſe we plead, and diſcovered thoſe *corrupt Affections*, from whence, helped on with variety of Temptations, they might probably proceed; Nor ſhall we uſe any Reflections on them who have ſeverely, and we fear *Maliciouſly* laid to their charge things which they know not; as hoping that by the former the Guilty may learn what to amend, now they are taught with ſuch thorns and briers as are the ſcorns and reproaches of the World; and by the latter the Innocent may know what to avoid. Such charges and Accuſations therefore we ſhall wholly paſs over, with our hearty prayers that the ſame or *worſe evils* may never be found amongſt them by whom they are accuſed. Much leſs ſhall we concern our ſelves in thoſe Reflections on them, which are raiſed from the *Words, Expreſſions*, or Actions of particular Perſons, as they have been reported and toſſed up and down in the *Lips of talkers*. The debate of ſuch things tends only to mutual exaſperations, and endleſs ſtrife. It may be alſo, that for the moſt part, they are *falſe*, or misreported invidiouſly, or misapplyed; and true or falſe, have been ſufficiently avenged by ſevere retortions. And in ſuch *Altercations* few men underſtand the ſharpneſs of their own words. Their *Edge* is towards them whom they oppoſe: But when a return of the like Expreſſions is made unto themſelves,

ſelves, they are ſenſible how they pierce. So are provocations heightened, and the firſt intendment of reducing *Love*, ends in mutual defamatory contentions. All things therefore of this nature, we ſhall paſs over, and help to bury by our Silence.

The principal charge againſt us, and that whereinto all other are reſolved, is our *Non-conformity unto the preſent Conſtitutions of the Church of England*. For hence are we accuſed to be guilty of the want of Chriſtian Love and peaceableneſs, of *Schiſm*, and an inclination to all ſorts of Diviſions, contrary to the Rules and Precepts of the Goſpel. Now we think it not unreaſonable to deſire, that thoſe who paſs ſuch cenſures on us, would attend unto the *common known Rule*; whereby alone a right Judgment in theſe caſes may be made. For it is not equal that we ſhould be concluded by other Mens particular *Meaſures*, as though by them we were to be regulated in the exerciſe of Love, and obſervance of Peace. And as we doubt not but that they fix thoſe *meaſures* unto themſelves in ſincerity, according unto their own Light and Apprehenſion of things; ſo we are ſure it will be no impeachment of their *Wiſdom* or *Holineſs*, to judge that others who differ from them, do with an equal integrity indeavour the direction and determination of their Conſciences, in what they believe and Practiſe. Yea, if they have not pregnant evidence to the contrary, it is their

duty

duty ſo to judge. A defect hereof is the ſpring of all that want of Love, whereof ſo great a *Complaint* is made. And rationally they are to be thought moſt ſincere and ſcrupulous herein, who take up with determinations, that are greatly to their *outward* diſadvantage. For unleſs it be from a conviction of preſent Duty with reſpect unto God, and their own *eternal* Good, men are not eaſily induced to cloſe with a judgment about ſacred things and religious Worſhip, which will not only certainly prejudice them, but endanger their ruine, in things *Temporal*. It is *ordinarily*, outward ſecular Advantages wherewith the Minds of Men are generally too much affected, that give an eaſie admiſſion unto Perſwaſions and Practices in Religion. By theſe are Men turned and changed every day from what before they profeſſed; when we hear of no turnings unto a *ſuffering profeſſion*, but what ariſe from ſtrong & unavoidable convictions. Moreover ſhould we indeavour to accommodate our ſelves to the *Lines* of other Men, it may make ſome change of the Perſons with whom we have to doe, but would not in the leaſt relieve us againſt the charges of *guilt of Schiſm* and want of Love which we ſuffer under. Some would preſcribe this *Meaſure* unto us, that we ſhould *occaſionally joyn with Pariſh Aſſemblies* as now ſtated in all their worſhip and ſacred Adminiſtrations; but will not require of us that we ſhould abſolutely forbear all other ways

and

and means of our own Edification. Will this *Meaſure* ſatisfie all amongſt us? will it free us from the imputation we ſuffer under? ſhall we not be ſaid any more to *want Chriſtian Love*, to be *factious* or guilty of Schiſm? It is known unto all how little it will conduce unto theſe Ends, and how little the moſt will grant that *Church Peace* is preſerved thereby. Yea the *Difficulty* will be increaſed upon us beyond what an ordinary Ability can ſolve, though we doubt not but that it may be done. For if we can do *ſo much*, we may expect juſtly to be preſſed ſeverely to anſwer, why we do *no more*. For others ſay immediately, that our Attendance on the publick Worſhip muſt be *conſtant*, with a forbearance of all other ways of Religious worſhip beyond that of a Family; yet this they would have us ſo to doe, as in the mean time ſtudiouſly to indeavour the *Reformation* of what is judged amiſs in the Doctrine, Diſcipline, and Worſhip of the Church. This is the *meaſure* which is preſcribed unto us by ſome; and we know not how many cenſures are paſſed upon us for a *nonconformity* thereunto. Will therefore a complyance unto this length better our condition? will it deliver us from the ſevereſt *Reflections* of being Perſons unpeaceable and intolerable? ſhall we live in a perpetual *diſſimulation* of our Judgments as to what needeth Reformation? will that anſwer our Duty? or give us peace in our latter End?

Shall

Shall we *profeſs* the perſwaſions of our minds in theſe things; and indeavour by all Lawful means to accompliſh what we deſire? ſhall we then eſcape the ſevereſt cenſures, as of Perſons *inclined to Schiſms* and Diviſions? Yea many great and wiſe Men of the *Church of England* doe look on this as the moſt pernicious Principle and Practice that any can betake themſelves unto. And in reporting the *Memorials* of former times, ſome of them have charged all the calamities and Miſeries that have befallen their Church, to have proceeded from Men of this Principle, endeavouring *Reformation* according unto Models of their own, without *Seperation.*

Heyl. Hiſt of Presb.

And could we conſcientiouſly betake our ſelves to the purſuit of the ſame Deſign, we ſhould not, eſpecially under preſent jealouſies and exaſperations, eſcape the ſame *condemnation*, that others before us have undergone. And ſo it is fallen out with ſome, which might teach them that their meaſures are not *authentick*; and they might learn Moderation towards them who cannot *come up unto them*, by the ſecurity they meet withall, from thoſe that *do outgo them.* Shall we therefore, which alone ſeems to remain, proceed yet farther, and making a Renunciation of all thoſe Principles concerning the Conſtitution, Rule, and Diſcipline of the Church, with the ways and manner of the Worſhip of God to be obſerved in the Aſſemblies of it, come over unto a *full Conformity* unto the preſent Conſtitutions

ſtitutions of the Church of *England*, and all the proceedings of its Rulers thereon? Yea this is that, ſay ſome, which is required of you, and that which would put an End unto all our Differences and Diviſions. We know indeed that an *Agreement* in any thing, or way, right or wrong, true or falſe, will promiſe ſo to do, and appear ſo to do, for a ſeaſon: But it is *Truth* alone that will make ſuch Agreements durable, or uſeful. And we are not ingaged in an inquiry meerly after *Peace*, but after *Peace with Truth*. Yea to lay aſide the Conſideration of *Truth*, in a diſquiſition after *Peace* and Agreement in and about ſpiritual things, is to exclude a regard unto God and his Authority, and to provide only for our ſelves. And what it is which at preſent lays a *Prohibition* on our Conſciences againſt the compliance propoſed, ſhall be afterwards declared; neither will we here inſiſt upon the diſcouragements that are given us, from the preſent ſtate of the Church it ſelf, which yet are not a few. Only we muſt ſay, that there doth not appear unto us in many that ſteadineſs in the profeſſion of the *Truth* owned amongſt us upon, and ſince the Reformation, nor that conſent upon the Grounds and Reaſons of the Government and Diſcipline in it, that we are required to ſubmit unto, which were neceſſary to invite any diſſentors to a through Conformity unto it. That there are daily inrodes made upon the *ancient Doctrine* of

this Church, and that without the leaſt controle from them who pretend to be the ſole Conſervators of it, untill, if not the whole, yet the principal parts of it are laid waſte, is ſufficiently evident, and may be eaſily proved. And we fear not to own, that we cannot conform to *Armianiſm*, *Socinianiſm*, on the one hand, or *Popery* on the other, with what new or ſpecious pretences ſoever they may be blended. And for the *Eccleſiaſtical Government*, as in the hands of *meer eccleſiaſtical Perſons*, when it is agreed among themſelves, whether it be *from Heaven or of Men*, we ſhall know the better how to judge of it. But ſuppoſe we ſhould wave all ſuch conſiderations, and come up to a *full Conformity* unto all that *is*, or *ſhall*, or *may* be required of us; will this give us an univerſally pleadable acquitment from the charges of the Guilt of want of Love, Schiſm and Diviſions? We ſhould indeed poſſibly be delivered from the noyſe and *clamour* of a few, crying out *Sectaries*, *Phanatieks*, *Schiſmaticks*, *Church-Dividers*; but withal ſhould continue under the cenſures of the great, and at preſent thriving *Church of Rome*, for the ſame ſuppoſed Crimes. And ſure enough we are, that a compliance with them who have been the real cauſes and occaſions of all the *Schiſms* and Diviſions that are amongſt Chriſtians almoſt in the whole world, would yield us no ſolid relief in the change of our condition. Yet without this no Men

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can free themſelves from the *loudeſt outcries* againſt them on the account of *Schiſm*. And this ſufficiently manifeſts how little indeed they are to be valued, ſeeing for the moſt part, they are nothing but the *ſteam* of Intereſt and Party. It is therefore apparent that the Accommodations of our Judgments and Practices to the *meaſures* of other men, will afford us no real advantage, as to the imputations we ſuffer under; nor will give ſatisfaction unto all Profeſſors of *Chriſtianity* that we purſue Love and Peace in a due manner: For what *one ſort* requireth of us, anonother will inſtantly diſallow and condemn. And it is well if the Judgment of the *Major Part* of all ſorts be not influenced by Cuſtome, prejudices, and ſecular Advantages. We have therefore no way left, but that which indeed ought to be the *only way* of Chriſtians in theſe things; namely to ſeek in ſincerity the ſatisfaction of our own Conſciences, and the approving of our hearts unto the ſearch of them, in a dilligent attendance unto our own eſpecial Duty, according to that Rule which will neither deceive us, nor fail us. And an Account of what we do herein, we ſhall now tender unto them that follow Truth with Peace.

CHAP. II.

Commendations of Love and Vnity. Their proper objects with their geniral Rules and measures. Of Love toward all mankind in genc.al. Allows not ſalvation unto any without faith in Chriſt Jeſus. Of the differences in Religion as to outward Worſhip.

THe Foundation of our diſcourſe might be laid in the commendation of *Chriſtian Love*, and Unity; and thereon we might eaſily enlarge; as alſo abound in a collection of *Teſtimonies* confirming our Aſſertions. But the old reply in ſuch a Caſe, *by whom ever were they diſcommended* evidenceth a labour therein to be needleſs and ſuperfluous. We ſhall therefore only ſay, that they are greatly miſtaken, who from the *Condition* whereunto at preſent we are *driven* and neceſſitated, do ſuppoſe that we value not theſe things at as high a Rate as themſelves, or any other Profeſſors of Chriſtian Religion in the world. A greater *noyſe* about them may be made poſſibly by ſuch as have accommodated their name and notion to their *own Interſts*, and who point their Pleas about them, and their pretences of them, to their own ſecular Advantage. But as for a real valuation of

of the *things themſelves*, as they are required of us, and preſcribed unto us in the Goſpel, we ſhall not willingly be found, to come behind any that own the name of Chriſt in the world. We know that God hath ſtiled himſelf, the *God of Love, Peace and Order*, in the Church, becauſe they are eminently from him, and highly accepted with him. And as *Love* is the *new Commandement* which *Jeſus Chriſt* hath given unto his Diſciples, ſo he hath appointed it to be the *bond of Perfection* unto them; which nothing elſe will ever be, however *finely invented* for them, or *forceably impoſed* on them. Without this *Love*, in what relates to Church Communion, whatever elſe we are, we are but as *ſounding braſs and tinkling Cymbals*. And all *Unity* or Agreement in outward order not proceeding from, and animated by this *Love*, are things wherein neither Chriſt nor the Goſpel are much concerned. An indeavour alſo after *one Mind* and *one Judgment*, amongſt all Believers, for a help unto us, to keep the *Unity of the ſpirit in the bond of Peace*, we acknowledge to be indiſpenſably required of us. And therefore where any *Opinion*, or *Practice*, in or about Religion or the worſhip of God, do apparently in themſelves impair the Gracious holy principles of Love and Peace, or obſtruct Men in the Exerciſe of any Duties which thoſe Principles require or lead unto, it is a great and weighty prejudice againſt their Truth, and *Phil.* 2. 2. *1 Cor.* 1. 10.

Acceptation with God. As therefore we ſhall not boaſt of the *prevalency* of theſe Principles in our minds; ſeeing that though we ſhould *know nothing* to the contrary by *our ſelves, yet are we not therefore juſtified*; ſo we are aſſured that none can juſtly condemn us, for the want of them, unleſs they can make good their charge by Inſtances not relating to the peculiar Differences, between them and us. For what *doth ſo*, will neither warrant any to make ſuch a Judgment, nor carry any *Conviction* in it towards them that are judged. Upon the whole matter, we ſhall not eaſily be diverted from purſuing our claim unto an *equal Intereſt* in theſe things with any other Profeſſors of the Chriſtian Religion; although at preſent we do it not by enlarged Commendations of them. Much leſs are we in the leaſt moved or ſhaken in our Minds from the *Accuſations* of them, who having the Advantage of Force and Power, do make a Compliance with themſelves, in all their *impoſitions* and ſelf-intereſted Conceptions, the ſole meaſure of other mens exerciſe and actings of theſe Principles. We have a much ſafer Rule whereby to make a Judgment of them, whereunto we know we *ſhall do well to attend, as unto a Light ſhining in a dark Place.* But now whereas all theſe things, namely *Love, Peace,* and *Unity*, are equally dear unto us; yet there are different Rules preſcribed, for the Exerciſe and purſuit of them. Our *Love* is to be *Catholick*, uncon-

unconfined as the beams of the Sun, or as the ſhowrs of rain that fall on the whole Earth. Nothing of Gods Rational Creation in this world, is to be exempted from being the Object thereof. And where only any Exception might ſeem to be warranted by ſome Mens cauſeleſs hatred, with unjuſt and unreaſonable perſecution of us, there the exerciſe of it is given us in *eſpecial and ſtricteſt charge*; which is one of the noble ſingularities of Chriſtian Religion. But whereas men are caſt into various conditions on the account of their Relation unto God, the actual exerciſe of Love towards them is required of us in a ſuitable variety. For it is God himſelf, in his Infinite Excellencies, who is the firſt and *adequate* Object of our Love; which deſcends unto others according to their Participations from him, and the eſpecial Relations created by his Appointment; whereof we ſhall ſpeak afterwards. Our Duty in the Obſervance of *Peace*, is, as unto its Object, equally extended. And the Rule or *Meaſure* given us herein, is the utmoſt of our indeavours in all ways of Truth and Righteouſneſs, which are required, or may have a tendency thereunto. For as we are commanded to *follow Peace with all men* under the ſame indiſpenſible neceſſity as to obtain and obſerve *Holineſs* in our own Perſons, without which *none ſhall ſee God*; ſo as to the meaſure of our indeavours unto this End, we are directed, *if it be poſſible, and as far as in us lieth*, 13. *Heb.* 12. 14. *Rom.* 11.

lieth, to live peaceably with all Men. The Rule for *Unity*, as it is ſuppoſed to comprize all Church Communion, falls under many Reſtrictions. For herein the eſpecial Commands of Chriſt, and *Inſtitutions* of the Goſpel committed unto our Care and Obſervance falling under conſideration, our Practice is preciſely limited unto thoſe Commands, and by the nature of thoſe Inſtitutions.

Theſe being the things we are to attend unto, and theſe being their general *Rules* and meaſures, we ſhall with reſpect unto the preſent ſtate of Religious Affairs in the world, amongſt thoſe who make Profeſſion of the Chriſtian Religion, plainly declare what are our thoughts and Judgments, what we conceive to be our *Duty*, and what is our Practice, ſubmitting them unto the preſent Apprehenſions of unprejudiced Perſons, leaving the *final Sentence* and determination of our Cauſe to the Judgment-Seat of Jeſus Chriſt.

Love toward all *Mankind in general* we acknowledge to be required of us; and we are *Debtors* in the fruits of it to the whole Creation of God. For he hath not only implanted the *Principles* of it in that nature whereof we are in common Partakers with the whole Race and Kind, whereunto all hatred and its Effects were originally *forreign* and introduced by the *Devil*; nor only given us his *Command* for it, enlarging on its grounds and

and Reaſons in the Goſpel; but in his Deſign of recovering us out of our lapſed condition unto a Conformity with himſelf, propoſeth in an eſpecial manner the Example of his *own Love* and Goodneſs, which are extended unto all, for our imitation. *Mat.* 5. 44,45. His *Philanthropie* and Communicative Love, from his own infinite ſelf-fulneſs, wherewith all Creatures in all Places, Times, and Seaſons, are filled and ſatisfied, as from an immeaſurable Ocean of Goodneſs, are propoſed unto us to direct the exerciſe of that drop from the *Divine Nature*, wherewith we are intruſted. *Love your Enemies*, ſaith our Saviour, *bleſs them that curſe you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which deſpightfully uſe you and perſecute you; that you may be the Children of your Father which is in Heaven, who maketh his Sun to riſe on the Evil and the Good, and ſendeth rain on the juſt, and on the Unjuſt.* Now all Mankind may be caſt into two Ranks or Orders. For Firſt, there are thoſe who are yet without Chriſt, being Aliens from the Commonwealth of Iſrael, and ſtrangers from the Covenants of Promiſe, having no hope, and without God in the World; ſuch we mean as are either *Negatively* or *Privatively* Infidels, or Unbelievers; who have yet never heard the Sound of the Goſpel, or do continue to refuſe and reject it, where it is propoſed and tendred unto them. And there are thoſe, Secondly, who have in one way or other

Epheſ. 2. 12,

ther received the Doctrine of the Goſpel, and do make profeſſion thereof in the World. To both theſe ſorts we do acknowledge that we owe the Duty of Love. Even towards the *Infidel*, *Pagan*, and *Mahumetan* world, *Jews* and *Gentiles*, we are Debtors in this Duty; and we deſire to be humbled for it as our Sin, wherein we are wanting in the diſcharge of it, or wherein the fruits of it do not abound in us to the Praiſe of God. Now *Love*, in the firſt notion of it, is the willing of a wanted Good unto the Object of it, or thoſe that are Loved, producing an endeavour to effect it, unto the utmoſt of the Ability of them in whom it is. Where this abſent Good is of great importance, the firſt natural and genuine Effect of Love is *Compaſſion*. This *Good*, as unto all *Unbelievers*, is whatever ſhould deliver them from preſent or eternal miſery; whatever ſhould lead, guide, or bring them unto Bleſſedneſs in the Enjoyment of God. Beſides the *abſence* hereof is accompanied even in this world, with all that Blindneſs and Darkneſs of Mind, all that ſlavery unto Sin and the *Devil*, that can any way concur to make a Rational Being truly miſerable. If we have not *hearts* like the flint or *Adamant*, we cannot but be moved with *Compaſſion* towards ſo many periſhing Souls, originally made like our ſelves in the Image of God, and from whom that we differ in any thing, is an Effect of meer Soveraign Grace, and not the fruit of our own Contrivance, nor the Reward of our worth

worth or merit. And thoſe who are altogether unconcerned in *others*, are not much concerned in *themſelves*; for the true Love of our ſelves, is the Rule of our Love unto other Men. Again, *Compaſſion* proceeding from Love will work by *Prayer* for Relief: For it is God alone who can ſupply their wants; and our only way of treating with him about it, is by our humble Supplications. And if herein alſo we ſhould be found *wanting*, we ſhould more judg our ſelves to be defective in true Chriſtian Love and Charity, than we can for many of thoſe miſtakes which are charged on us in other things, were we convinced that ſuch they are, which as yet we are not. It is therefore our continual Prayer, that God would *ſend out his Light and his Truth* unto the utmoſt parts of the Earth, to viſit by them thoſe dark places, which are yet filled with habitations of cruelty; that he would remove the vail of covering which is yet on the Face of many great and Populous Nations, that the whole Earth may be filled with the *knowledg of the Lord, as the waters cover the Sea*; even that according to his Promiſe, *he would turn to the People a pure Language, that they may all call upon the Name of the Lord, to ſerve him with one conſent.* And this we deſire to be found doing, not in a formal or Cuſtomary manner, but out of a ſincere *Compaſſion* for the Souls of men, a deep ſenſe of the Intereſt herein of the Glory of God, and a deſire after the Accompliſhment

pliſhment of thoſe Prophecies and Promiſes in the Scripture, which ſpeak comfortably towards an Expectation of abundant Grace to be manifeſted unto the reſidue of Sinners, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, in the latter dayes. Moreover, unto Compaſſion and Supplications, Love requireth that we ſhould add alſo all other poſſible *Endeavours for their Relief*. Herein conſiſts that work and Labour of Love, which are ſo much recommended unto us. But the *Actings of Love* in theſe moſt uſeful ways, are for the moſt part obſtructed unto us, by the want of opportunities, which under the Guidance of Divine Providence are the Rule of our Call unto the Duties wherein ſuch endeavours conſiſt, and whereby they may be expreſſed. Only this at preſent we have to rejoyce in, that through the unwearied Labours of ſome Holy and Worthy Perſons, *Sundry Churches of Indians* are lately called and gathered in *America*, wherein the Natives of thoſe parts of the World, who for ſo many Generations *ſate in Darkneſs, and in the ſhadow of death*, do under the guidance of Paſtors and Elders of their own, walk in the *Fellowſhip of the Goſpel*, giving Glory to God by *Jeſus Chriſt*. And let it not ſeem impertinent that we have given this Account of our Judgments concerning that Love which we do and ought to bear unto *all*, even the *worſt of men*; ſeeing thoſe by whom our Teſtimony is received, will not, nay, cannot eaſily ſuppoſe that we would *wilfully neglect* the exerciſe

exerciſe of the ſame Affections towards thoſe, concerning whom our Obligations thereunto, are unſpeakably greater and more Excellent.

There is indeed another kind of *pretended charity* towards this ſort of men, which we profeſs we have not for them, although we judge we do not want it. For there can be no want unto any of an *Errour* or miſtake, wherein the charity intended doth conſiſt. And this is the judgment of ſome, that they or *ſome of* them may attain ſalvation or eternal bleſſedneſs in the condition wherein they are, *without the knowledge* of Jeſus Chriſt. This we acknowledge we neither believe, nor hope concerning them; nor, to ſpeak plainly, can *deſire it ſhould be ſo*, unleſs God had otherwiſe revealed himſelf concerning *Jeſus Chriſt* and them, than yet he hath done. And we are ſo far from ſuppoſing that there is in us on this account any *blameable defect of charity*, that we know our ſelves to be freed by this perſwaſion from a dangerous errour, which if admitted, would both weaken our own faith, and impair all the due and proper effects of charity towards others. For *though there be that are called gods, whether in Heaven or in earth (as there be gods many, and lords many) yet unto us there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by whom are all things, and we by him.* We know there is no ſalvation in any other but by *Jeſus Chriſt*; and *that*

1 Cor. 8. 5, 6.

Acts 4. 12.

that there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we muſt be ſaved. Nor is this Name given any otherwiſe amongſt men, but by the Goſpel: For it is not the giving of the perſon of Chriſt abſolutely to be a *Mediatour*, but the declaration of his *Name* by the Goſpel, as the means of ſalvation, that is intended. Hence our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, giving that Commiſſion to his Apoſtles to preach it, *Go ye into all the world, and preach the Goſpel to every Creature*, he adds unto it that decretory ſentence, concerning the everlaſting condition of all men with reſpect thereunto; *He that believeth and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; and he that believeth not, ſhall be damned.* As the *Preaching of the Goſpel*, and the belief on Jeſus Chriſt thereon, are the only means of obtaining ſalvation; ſo all thoſe who are not made partakers of them muſt periſh eternally. So when the Apoſtle affirms that the *Jewes* would have hindred them *from preaching to the Gentiles that they might be ſaved*, he plainly declares that without it they could not ſo be. Neither were any of them ever better, or in a better condition, than they are deſcribed by the ſame Apoſtle, *Epheſ.* 2. 12. And in ſundry other places, wherein he allows them no poſſibility of obtaining eternal bleſſedneſs. Neither do we in this matter conſider what *God can do*, or what he hath done to the communicating of grace and faith in Jeſus Chriſt unto any *particular perſons* at any time, or in any place, in an extraordinary manner.

Mark. 16. 15. 16.

1 *Theſſ.* 2. 16.

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We are not called to make a judgment thereof, nor can any Rule be hence collected to regulate the exerciſe of our love. *Secret things belong to the Lord our God, but revealed things to us and our children, that we may do his will.* When and *where* ſuch grace and faith do manifeſt themſelves by their effects, we ought readily to own and embrace them. But the only *inquiry* in this matter is, What thoſe that are utterly deſtitute of the Revelation of Jeſus Chriſt, either as made *originally* in the promiſe, or as *explained* in the Goſpel, may under the meer conduct of the Light of Nature, as conſiſting in the innate principles of Reaſon, with their improvement, or as increaſed by the conſideration of the effects of *divine power* and Providence, by the ſtrength and exerciſe of their own moral principles attain unto, as unto their preſent acceptance with God, and future eternal ſalvation. That they may be *ſaved in every Sect, who live exactly according to the Light of Nature*, is a Doctrine anathematized by the Church of *England*, *Artic.* 8. And the Reaſon given hereof is, becauſe the *Scriptures propoſe the Name of Jeſus Chriſt alone whereby we may be ſaved.* And if we do believe that deſcription which is given in the Scripture of men, their *moral abilities*, and their works, as they lye in the common ſtate of Mankind, ſince the entrance of ſin, with reſpect unto God and ſalvation, we ſhall not be able to be of another mind: For they are ſaid to be *blind*, yea to be *darkneſs*, to be *dead* in treſ- *Luk.* 4. 18.

Acts 26. 18. treſpaſſes and *ſins*, not to receive the things of the Spirit of God, becauſe they *are fooliſhneſs* *Eph.*2.1, 2, 3. unto them; and their minds to be *enmity againſt God himſelf*. That there may be any juſt ex- *Ch.*4.18. pectation concerning ſuch *perſons*, that they *Rom.*8.8. will work out *their ſalvation with fear and trembling*, we are not convinced: Neither do we think that God will accept of a more imperfect obedience in them that know not *Jeſus Chriſt*, than he requires of them who do believe in him, for then ſhould he prove a diſadvantage unto them. Beſide, all their beſt works are ſeverely reflected on in the Scripture, and repreſented as unprofitable: For whereas in themſelves they are compared to *evil Trees*, *Thorns*, and *Briars*, we are aſſured they neither do, nor can bring forth *good grapes or Figgs*. Beſides in the Scripture, the whole buſineſs of ſalvation in the firſt place turns upon the Hinge of Faith ſupernatural *Heb.* 11. 6. and divine; *for without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God*; and, *He that believeth not, ſhall be* *Joh.*3.15 36. *damned*; *He that believeth not in the name of the Son of God is condemned already*; for *neiGal.* 5.6. *ther Circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion, but faith that worketh by love*: And it is by faith *that the juſt ſhall live*. That this Faith may be educed out of the obedientiall Principle of Nature, 'twas indeed the opinion of *Pelagius* of old; but 'twill not now, we hope, be openly aſſerted by any. Moreover, this Faith is in the Scripture, if not limited and determined, yet directed unto Jeſus Chriſt

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as its neceſſary peculiar Object : *For this is Life eternal, that we may know the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom he hath ſent.* It ſeems therefore that the knowledge of the *only true God*, is not ſufficient to attain *eternal life*, unleſs the knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt alſo do accompany it : For *this is* the record of Heaven, that *God hath given unto us eternal Life, and this life is in his Son* : He *that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.* Which is enough to determine the controverſie. And thoſe Aſſertions, that there *is no other Name given amongſt men, whereby they may be ſaved*; and *that other foundation can no man lay, ſave what is laid, that is, Jeſus Chriſt*; are of the ſame importance; and it were needleſs to multiply the Teſtimonies that are given us to that purpoſe elſewhere. Neither can it be made to appear, that the concatenation of the ſaving means, whereby men that are *adult* are brought unto glory, is not abſolutely univerſal: And amongſt them there is *Vocation*, or an effectual Calling to the knowledg of Chriſt by the Goſpel. Neither will the ſame Apoſtle allow a ſaving invocation of the Name of God to any but thoſe that are brought to believe by *hearing the Word preached.* It is ſaid, that God may by wayes ſecret and unknown to us, reveal Jeſus Chriſt to them, and ſo by faith in him ſanctifie their natures, and endow them with his Spirit; which things, it is granted, we ſuppoſe, are indiſpenſibly neceſſary unto

1 *Joh.* 5. 11, 12.

Act. 4. 12 1 *Cor.* 3. 11.

Rom. 8. 29, 30.

Rom. 10. 13, 14, 15

ſalvation. Thoſe whom God thus deals with-all are not *Pagans*, but Chriſtians, concerning whom none ever doubted, but they might be ſaved. It is alſo granted, that men may learn much of the power, wiſdome and goodneſs of God, which both require and teach many *Duties* to be performed towards him; but withall we believe, that without *the internal ſanctification of the Spirit*, communicated by and with the knowledg of Jeſus Chriſt, no man can be ſaved. But we intend not here to diſpute about theſe things. Inſtead of an effect of Love and Charity, it is manifeſt that the Opinion which grants *ſalvation unto the Heathen*, or any of them, upon the due improvement of their Rational Faculties and moral Principles, ariſeth from a want of due conſideration of the true nature of Sin and Grace, of the Fall of Man and his Recovery, of the Law and Goſpel, and of the Wiſdome and Love of God in ſending Jeſus Chriſt to make attonement for ſinners, and to bring in everlaſting Righteouſneſs. And not only ſo, but it evidently Prepares the way unto thoſe *noxious Opinions* which at this day among many infeſt and corrupt Chriſtian Religion, and foment thoſe Seeds of *Atheiſm* which ſpring up ſo faſt as to threaten the overſpreading of the whole Field of Chriſtianity. For hence it will follow by an eaſie deduction, that every *one may be ſaved*, or attain unto his utmoſt happineſs in his own Religion, be it what it will, whilſt under any notion or conception he ac-

knowledgeth a Divine Being, and his own dependance thereon. And ſeeing that on this ſuppoſition it muſt be confeſſed, that Religion conſiſts ſolely in *moral Honeſty*, and a fancied *internal Piety* of mind towards the Deity, (for in nothing elſe can a centring of all Religions in the world unto a certain end be imagined) it follows, that there is *no outward Profeſſion of it* indiſpenſibly neceſſary, but that every one may take up, and make uſe of that which is beſt ſuited unto his intereſt in his preſent condition and circumſtances. And as this being once admitted, will give the minds of men an *Indifferency*, as unto the ſeveral Religions that are in the world, ſo it will quickly produce in them a *Contempt* of them all. And from an entertainment of, or an indifferency of mind about theſe and the like *noyſome opinions*, it is come to paſs, that the Goſpel after a continued Triumph for *ſixteen hundred years* over Hell and the world, doth at this day in the midſt of *Chriſtendome* hardly with multitudes maintain the reputation of its truth and Divinity; and is by *many*, living in a kind of outward conformity unto the Inſtitutes of Chriſtian Religion, deſpiſed & laughed to ſcorn. But the proud and fooliſh *Atheiſtical Opiniators* of our dayes, whoſe ſole deſign is to fortifie themſelves by the darkneſs of their minds, againſt the charges of their own conſciences upon their wicked and debauched converſations, do but expoſe themſelves to the ſcorn of all ſober and rational Perſons.

For what are a *few obſcure*, and for the moſt part *vitious Renegadoes*, in compariſon of thoſe great, wiſe, numerous and ſober perſons, whom the Goſpel in its firſt ſetting forth in the world, by the *evidence* of its *truth*, and the *efficacy* of its *Power*, ſubdued and conquered? Are they as learned as the renowned *Philoſophers* of thoſe dayes, who advantaged by the endeavours and fruits of all the great Wits of *former Ages* had advanced ſolid rational Literature to the *greateſt height* that ever it attained in this world; or poſſibly ever will do ſo; the minds of men having now ſomthing more excellent and noble to entertain themſelves withall? Are they to be equalled in *wiſdome* and *experience*, with thoſe glorious Emperors, *Senators* and *Princes*, who then ſwayed the Scepters and affairs of the world? Can they produce any thing to *oppoſe unto the Goſpel*, that is likely to influence the minds of men, in any degree comparably to the Religion of theſe great, learned, wiſe and mighty Perſonages, which having received by their Fathers, from dayes immemorial, was viſibly attended with all *Earthly Gloryes* and *Proſperities*, which were accounted as the reward of their due obſervance of it? And yet whereas there was a *Conſpiracy* of all thoſe perſons, and this influenced by the craft of *infernal Powers*, and managed with all that wiſdome, ſubtlety, power and cruelty, that the nature of man is capable to exerciſe, on purpoſe to oppoſe the Goſpel, and keep it from taking Root in the

the world; yet by the glorious *evidence of its divine extract* and original wherewith it is accompanied, by the efficacy and power which God gave the Doctrine of it in and over the minds of men, all mannaged by the ſpiritual weapons of its Preachers, *which were mighty through God, to the pulling down of thoſe ſtrong holds, caſting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalted it ſelf againſt the knowledge of God*; it prevailed againſt them all, and ſubdued the world unto an acknowledgment of its truth, with the divine power and authority of its Author. Certainly there is nothing more contemptible, than that the *Indulgence of ſome inconſiderable Perſons* unto their luſts and vices, who are void of all *thoſe excellencies* in notion and practiſe, which have already been triumphed over by the Goſpel, when ſet up in competition with it, or oppoſition unto it, ſhould be once imagined to bring it into queſtion, or to caſt any diſreputation upon it. But to treat of theſe things is not our preſent deſign; we have only mentioned them *occaſionally*, in the account which it was neceſſary we ſhould give concerning our *Love* to *all men*, in general, with the grounds we proceed upon in the exerciſe of it.

2 *Cor.* 10 4, 5.

CHAP. III.

Nature of the Catholick Church. The firſt and principal Object of Chriſtian Love. Differences among the Members of this Church, of what nature, and how to be managed. Of the Church Catholick as viſibly profeſſing: The extent of it, or who belongs unto it. Of Union and Love in this Church-ſtate of the Church of England *with reſpect hereunto. Of particular Churches: Their inſtitution: Corruption of that Inſtitution. Of Churches Dioceſan,* &c. *Of ſeparation from corrupt particular Churches. The juſt Cauſes thereof,* &c.

IN the *ſecond ſort of Mankind* before mentioned, conſiſts the viſible Kingdome of Chriſt in this world. This being grounded in his Death and Reſurrection, and conſpicuouſly *ſettled* by his ſending of the Holy Ghoſt after his Aſcenſion, he hath ever ſince preſerved in the world, againſt all the contrivances of Satan, or oppoſitions of the Gates of Hell, and will doſo unto the conſummation of all things; For he *muſt reign until all his enemies are made his Footſtool.* Towards theſe on all accounts our *Love* ought to be intenſe and fervent, as that which is the immediate Bond of our Relation

lation unto them, and Union with them. And this Kingdome or Church of Christ on the earth, may be, and is generally by all considered under a threefold notion. (1.) First, as therein, and among the Members of it, is comprized that *real living and spiritual body of his*, which is firstly, peculiarly, and properly the *Catholick Church* militant in this world. These are his Elect, Redeemed, justified, and sanctified ones, who are savingly united unto their Head, by the same quickning and sanctifying Spirit, dwelling *in him in all fulness*, and communicated *unto them by him*, according to his Promise. This is that *Catholick Church* which we profess to believe, which being hid from the eyes of men, and absolutely invisible in its *Mystical Form*, or spiritual saving Relation unto the Lord Christ, and its Unity with him, is yet more or less alwayes visible, by that *Profession of Faith* in him, and obedience unto him, which it maketh in the world, and is alwayes obliged so to do. For *With the Heart man believeth unto Righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.* Rom. 10. 10. And this Church we believe to be so disposed over the whole world, that where-ever there are any *Societies* or *Numbers of men* who ordinarily profess the Gospel, and subjection to the Kingly Rule of Christ thereby, with an hope of eternal blessedness by his Mediation; we no way doubt but that there are among them *some* who really belong thereunto. In and by them doth the Lord Christ continually

fulfil and accompliſh the *Promiſe of his Preſence* by his Spirit with them that believe in his name; who are thereby Intereſted in all the Priviledges of the Goſpel, and *Authorized* unto the Adminiſtration and Participation of all the Holy Ordinances thereof. And were it not that we ought not to *boaſt our ſelves againſt others*, Eſpecially ſuch as have not had the Spiritual Advantages that the Inhabitants of theſe Nations have been intruſted withal, and who have been expoſed unto *more violent Temptations* than they, we ſhould not fear to ſay, that among thoſe of all ſorts who in theſe Nations hold the Head, there is probably according unto a Judgment to be made by the fruits of that Spirit which is ſavingly communicated unto the Church in this ſenſe alone, a greater number of Perſons belonging thereunto, than in any *One Nation or Church* under Heaven. The charge therefore of ſome againſt us, that we *Paganize the Nation*, by reaſon of ſome different Apprehenſions from others, concerning the regular Conſtitution of *particular Churches* for the Celebration of Goſpel Worſhip, is wondrous vain and ungrounded. But we know that men uſe ſuch ſevere Expreſſions and Reflections, out of a *diſcompoſed habit of Mind* which they have accuſtomed themſelves unto, and not from a ſedate Judgment and conſideration of the things themſelves. And hence they will labour to *convince others* of that, whereof, if they would put it unto a ſerious Tryal, they

they would never be able to convince themſelves.

This then is that Church which on the account of their *Sincere faith and Obedience* ſhall be ſaved; and out of which, on the account of their *Profeſſion*, there is no ſalvation to be obtained; which things are weakly and arrogantly appropriated unto any *Particular Church* or Churches in the World. For it is poſſible that men may be Members of it, and yet not belong or relate unto any particular Church on the Earth; and ſo it often falleth out as we could manifeſt by inſtances, did that work now lie before us. This is the Church which the *Lord Chriſt loved and gave himſelf for it; that he might ſanctifie and cleanſe it with the waſhing of water by the Word; that he might preſent it unto himſelf a Glorious Church, not having ſpot or wrinkle or any ſuch thing, but that it ſhould be holy and without blemiſh.* And we muſt acknowledge that in all things *this is the Church*, unto which we have our firſt and Principal regard, as being the ſpring from which all other conſiderations of the Church do flow. Within the virge and compaſs of it, do we indeavour to be found, the End of the Diſpenſation of the Goſpel unto Men being that they ſhould do ſo. Neither would we to ſave our Lives, (*which for the Members of this Church* and their good, we are bound to lay down, when juſtly called thereunto) wilfully live in the neglect of that Love towards them or any of them,

Epheſ. 5. 26, 27.

1 *Joh.* 3. 16.

them, which we hope God hath planted in our hearts, and made natural unto us, by that *one and ſelf-ſame Spirit*, by whom the whole Myſtical Body of Chriſt is animated. We do confeſs, that becauſe the beſt of Men in this Life do *know but in part*, that all the Members of this Church are in many things liable to Error, miſtakes, and Miſcarriages: And hence it is, that although they are all *internally acted and guided by the ſame Spirit*, in all things abſolutely neceſſary to their Eternal ſalvation, and do all attend unto the ſame *Rule of the Word*, according as they apprehend the mind of God in it, and concerning it, have all for the Nature and Subſtance of it, the *ſame Divine Faith* and Love, and are all equally *united* unto their Head; yet in the Profeſſion which they make of the conceptions and perſwaſions of their minds, about the things revealed in the Scripture, there are, and always have been many Differences among them. Neither is it *morally poſſible* it ſhould be otherwiſe, whilſt in their Judgment and Profeſſion they are left unto the Ability of their own Minds, and Liberty of their Wills, under that great variety of the Means of Light and Truth, with other Circumſtances, whereinto they are diſpoſed by the Holy Wiſe Providence of God. Nor hath the Lord Chriſt *abſolutely* Promiſed that it ſhall be otherwiſe with them; but ſecuring them all by his Spirit in the *foundations of eternal Salvation*, he leaves them in other things

things to the exerciſe of mutual Love and forbearance; with a charge of Duty after a continual endeavour to grow up unto a perfect Union, by the improvement of the bleſſed Aids and Aſſiſtances which he is pleaſed to afford unto them. And thoſe who by *ways of Force* would drive them into any other Union or Agreement, than their own Light and Duty will lead them into, do what in them lies to oppoſe the whole Deſign of the Lord Chriſt towards them, and his Rule over them. In the mean time it is granted, that they may fall into Diviſions and *Schiſms*, and mutual Exaſperations among themſelves, through the Remainders of Darkneſs in their minds, and the Infirmity of the fleſh. And in ſuch Caſes *mutual judgings* and deſpiſings are apt to enſue; and that to the Prejudice and great Diſadvantages of that *Common faith* which they do profeſs. And yet notwithſtanding all this (ſuch croſs intangled wheels are there in the courſe of our Nature) they all of them really value and eſteem the *things wherein they agree* incomparably above thoſe wherein they differ. But their valuation of the *matter* of their Union and Agreement is purely *ſpiritual*; whereas their Differences are uſually influenced by *Carnal* and Secular Conſiderations, which have for the moſt part a ſenſible Impreſſion on the Minds of poor Mortals. But ſo far as their Diviſions and Differences are unto them unavoidable, the *Remedy* of farther Evils proceeding

Rom. 14. 3.

ceeding from them, is plainly and frequently expreſſed in the Scripture. It is *Love, Meekneſs*, forbearance, bowels of Compaſſion, with thoſe other Graces of the Spirit, wherein our Conformity unto Chriſt doth conſiſt, with a true underſtanding and due valuation of the *Unity of faith*, and the common Hope of Believers, which are the ways preſcribed unto us, for the prevention of thoſe Evils which, without them, our unavoidable Differences will occaſion. And this *excellent way* of the Goſpel, together with a Rejection of *evil ſurmiſes*, and a watchfulneſs over our ſelves againſt *irregular judging* and cenſuring of others, together with a peaceable walking in conſent and Unity ſo far as we have attained, is ſo fully and clearly propoſed unto us therein, that they muſt have their *Eyes blinded* by Prejudices and Carnal Intereſts, or ſome effectual working *of the God of this world on their minds*, into whoſe underſtandings the Light of it doth not ſhine with uncontroulable Evidence and Conviction. That the *Sons or Children of this* Church of *Jeruſalem which is above, and is the Mother of us all*, ſhould on the account of their various Apprehenſions of ſome things relating to Religion or the worſhip of God, unavoidably attending their frail and imperfect condition in this world, yea or of any *Schiſms* or Diviſions enſuing thereon, proceeding from Corrupt and not throughly mortified Affections, be warranted to hate, judge, deſpiſe

ſpiſe or contemn one another, much more to ſtrive by *external force* to coerce, puniſh or deſtroy them that differ from them, is as forreign to the Goſpel, as that we ſhould believe in *Mahomet*, and not in *Jeſus Chriſt*. Whatever ſhare therefore we are *forced* to bare in Differences with, or Diviſions from the Members of this Church, (that is, any who declare and evidence themſelves ſo to be, by a *viſible and regular Profeſſion of faith and Obedience*) as it is a continual ſorrow and trouble unto us; ſo we acknowledge it to be our Duty (and ſhall be willing to undergo any blame, where we are found defective in the Diſcharge of it, unto the utmoſt of our Power) to endeavour after the *ſtricteſt Communion* with them in all Spiritual things, that the Goſpel doth require, or whereof our condition in this world is capable. In the mean time, untill this can be attained, it is our deſire to mannage the *Profeſſion of our own Light* and Apprehenſions, without Anger, Bitterneſs, Clamours, Evil ſpeaking, or any other thing that may be irregular in our ſelves, or give juſt cauſe of *offence* unto others. Our Prayers are alſo continually for the ſpiritual Proſperity of this Church, for its increaſe in *Faith and Holineſs*, and eſpecially for the healing of all breaches that are among them that belong thereunto throughout the World. And were we not ſatisfied that the *Principles* which we own, about the right *Conſtitution of the Churches of Chriſt*, and the

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Worſhip of God to be obſerved in them, are ſingularly ſuited to the furtherance and Preſervation of *Union* and due Order among all the members of this Church, we ſhould not need to be excited by any unto their Renunciation. But our main deſign in all theſe things is, that both they, and we with them, may enjoy that peace which the Lord Chriſt hath *bequeathed* unto us, and walk in the way which he hath preſcribed for us. And theſe things we mention, neither to *boaſt* of, nor yet to *juſtifie* our ſelves, but only to acknowledge what is our conviction concerning our Duty in this matter. And might there any ſedate, peaceable, *unprejudicate endeavours* be countenanced and encouraged, for the allaying of all occaſional diſtempers, and the compoſing of all differences among them who belong to this Church of Chriſt, ſo as that they might all of them (at leaſt in theſe Nations) not only *keep the unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*, but alſo agree and conſent in all wayes and Acts of *Religious Communion*; we doubt not but to manifeſt, that no rigid adherence unto the practiſe of any conceptions of our own, in things wherein the Goſpel alloweth a *condeſcention* and forbearance, no delight in ſingularity, no prejudice againſt perſons or things, ſhould obſtruct us in the promotion of it to the utmoſt of our power and ability. Upon the whole matter we own it as our duty to *follow and ſeek after peace, unity, conſent and agreement in holy worſhip*, with all the

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members of this Church, or thoſe who by a regular profeſſion manifeſt themſelves ſo to be; and will with all readineſs and alacrity *renounce* every principle or practiſe, that is either inconſiſtent with ſuch communion, or directly or indirectly is in its ſelf obſtructive of it.

Secondly, The Church of Chriſt may be conſidered with reſpect unto its *outward Profeſſion*, as conſtitutive of its *Being*, and the formal Reaſon of its denomination. And this is *the Church Catholick viſible*, whereunto they all univerſally belong, who profeſs the invocation of the Name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, their Lord and ours, under the limitations that ſhall be mentioned afterwards. And this is the *viſible Kingdome of Chriſt*, which on the account of its profeſſion, and thereby, is diſtinguiſhed from that *world which lyeth in evil*, and is abſolutely under the power of Satan: And ſo in common uſe, the *Church* and the *world* are contradiſtinguiſhed. Yet on other accounts many who belong unto this Church, by reaſon of *ſome kind of profeſſion* that they make, may juſtly be eſteemed to be the *world*, or of it. So our Lord Jeſus Chriſt called the generality of the *profeſſing Church* in his time: *The world*, ſaith he, *hateth me*; And that we may know that he thereby intended the Church of the *Jewes*, beſides that the circumſtances of the place evince it, he puts it out of queſtion by the Teſtimony which he produceth in the confirmation of his

John. 15. 18, 19. 25.

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Aſſertion concerning their unjuſt and cauſleſs hatred; namely, *It is written in their Law, they have hated me without a cauſe*; which
*Pſ.*35.19 being taken out of the *Pſalms*, was part of the Law, or Rule of the *Judaical Church* only. Now he thus terms them, becauſe the generality of them, eſpecially their *Rulers*, although they profeſſed to know God, and to worſhip him according to his Word, and the Tradition of their Fathers, yet were not only corrupt and wicked in their Lives, but alſo *perſecuted* him and his Diſciples, in whom the Power and Truth of God were manifeſted beyond what they were able to bear. And hence a General Rule is eſtabliſhed, that what *Profeſſion* ſoever any men do make of the Knowledge and Worſhip of God, to what *Church* ſoever they do, or may be thought to belong, yet if they are wicked or ungodly in their Lives, and Perſecuters of ſuch as are better than themſelves, they are really of the *World*, , and with it will periſh, without Repentance. Theſe are they, who receiving on them a *Form* or Delineation *of Godlineſs*, do yet *deny the Power* of it; from whom, we are commanded to *turn away*: But yet we acknowledge that there is a real difference to be made between them, who in any way or manner make *profeſſion* of the Name of Chriſt with ſubjection unto him, and that *Infidel world*; by whom the Goſpel is totally rejected, or to whom it was never tendred.

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In the *Catholick visible Church*, as comprehenſive of all who throughout the world outwardly own the Goſpel, there is an acknowledgment of *one Lord*, *one Faith*, *one Baptiſm*, which are a ſufficient Foundation of that Love, Union and Communion among them, which they are capable of, or are required of them. For in the *joynt Profeſſion* of the ſame Lord, Faith and Baptiſm, conſiſts the Union of the Church, under this conſideration, that is, as *Catholick and viſibly profeſſing*, and in nothing elſe. And hereunto alſo is required as the principle animating that Communion, and rendring it acceptable, *mutual Love* with its occaſional Exerciſe; as a fruit of that Love which we have unto Jeſus Chriſt, who is the Object of our Common Profeſſion. And ſetting aſide the conſideration of them who openly reject the *Principal Fundamentals of Chriſtian Religion*, (as denying the Lord Chriſt to be the Eternal Son of God, with the uſe and efficacy of his death, as alſo the Perſonal ſubſiſtence and Deity of the Holy Spirit,) and there is no known Community of theſe Profeſſors in the world, but they own ſo much of the Truths, concerning *one Lord*, *one Faith*, *and one baptiſm*, as are ſufficient to guide them unto Life and Salvation. And hereon we no way doubt, but that among them all there are ſome really belonging to the *Purpoſe of Gods Election*, who by the means that they do enjoy, ſhall at length be brought unto

everlaſting Glory. For we do not think that God by his Providence would maintain the *Diſpenſation of the Goſpel* in any Place, or among any Peop'e, among whom there are none whom he hath deſigned to bring unto the Enjoyment of Himſelf. For that is the Rule of his ſending and continuing of it; whereon he enjoyned the *Apoſtle Paul* to ſtay in ſuch places where he *had much People* whom he would have to be converted. He would not continue from Generation to Generation, to ſcatter his *Pearls* where there were none but *rending Swine*, nor ſend *Fiſhers* unto waters wherein he knew there were nothing but *Serpents* and *Vipers*. It is true, the Goſpel as preached unto many is only a *Teſtimony* againſt them, leaving them without excuſe; and proves unto them *a Savour of Death unto Death*. But the firſt, direct, and principal Deſign of the Diſpenſation of it, being the Converſion of Souls, and their eternal ſalvation, it will not probably be continued in any Place, nor is ſo, where this *Deſign* is not purſued nor accompliſhed towards any. Neither will God make uſe of it any where meerly for the Aggravation of Mens Sins and Condemnation; nor would his ſo doing conſiſt with the Honour of the Goſpel its ſelf, or the Glory of that Love and Grace which it profeſſeth to declare. Where it is indeed openly rejected, there that ſhall be the *Condemnation of Men*; but where it finds any admittance, there it hath ſomewha

Acts. 18. 9, 10, 11.

Mat. 24. 14.

2 *Cor.* 2. 16.

of its genuine and proper work to effect. And the Goſpel is eſteemed to be in all Places diſpenſed and *admitted*, where the Scripture being received as the word of God, Men are from the Light, Truth, and Doctrine contained therein, by any means ſo far inſtructed, as to take upon them the profeſſion of ſubjecting their Souls to Jeſus Chriſt, and of obſerving the Religious Duties by him preſcribed, in oppoſition to all falſe Religions in the World. Amongſt all theſe the *Foundations of ſaving Faith* are at this day preſerved: For they univerſally receive the whole *Canonical Scripture*, and acknowledge it to be the word of God, on ſuch motives as prevail with them to do ſo ſincerely. Herein they give a tacit conſent unto the whole Truth contained in it; for they receive it as from God without exception or limitation. And this they cannot do without a *General Renunciation* of all the falſities and Evils that it doth condemn. Where theſe things concur, men will not believe nor practiſe any thing in Religion, but what they think *God requires of them*, and will accept from them. And we find it alſo in the Event, that all the Perſons ſpoken of, where-ever they are, do univerſally profeſs, that they believe in the *God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, and in his only and Eternal Son. They all look alſo for Salvation by him, and profeſs obedience unto him, believing that God raiſed him from the Dead. They believe in like manner

that the *Holy Spirit* is the Spirit of the Father and the Son, with many other ſacred Truths of the ſame importance; as alſo, that *without Holineſs no Man ſhall ſee God.* However therefore they are differenced and divided among themſelves, however they are mutually eſteemed *Hereticks* and *Schiſmaticks*, however through the Subtlety of Satan they are excited and provoked to *Curſe* and *Perſecute* one another, with wonderful Folly, and by an open contradiction unto other Principles which they profeſs; yet are they all Subjects of the Viſible Kingdom of Chriſt, and belong all of them to the *Catholick Church*, making profeſſion of the name of Chriſt in the World, in which there is Salvation to be obtained, and out of which there is none.

We take not any conſideration at preſent of that abſurd, fooliſh and *uncharitable Error*, which would confine the *Catholick Church* of Chriſt unto a particular Church of one ſingle Denomination; or indeed rather unto a combination of ſome Perſons, in an outward mode of Religious Rule and Worſhip; whereof the Scripture is as ſilent, as of things that never were, nor ever ſhall be. Yea we look upon it as intollerable Preſumption, and the utmoſt height of *Uncharitableneſs*, for any to judge, that the conſtant Profeſſion of the name of Chriſt, made by Multitudes of Chriſtians, with the laſting miſeries and frequent *Martyrdomes* which for his ſake they undergo, ſhould turn unto no advantage either of the

Glory

Glory of God, or their own Eternal Bleſſedneſs, becauſe in ſome things they differ from them. Yet ſuch is the Judgment of thoſe of the *Church of Rome*; and ſo are they bound to judge by the fundamental Principles and Laws of their Church Communion. But men ought to fear leaſt they ſhould *meet with Judgment without Mercy, who have ſhewed no Mercy.* Had we ever entertained a thought uncharitable to ſuch a Prodigie of inſolence, had we ever excluded any ſort of *Chriſtians* abſolutely from an intereſt in the Love of God or Grace of Jeſus Chriſt, or hopes of Salvation, becauſe they do not, or will not comply with thoſe ways and terms of *outward Church Communion* which we approve of, we ſhould judg our ſelves as highly criminal in want of Chriſtian Love, as any can deſire to have us eſteemed ſo to be. *Jam.* 2. 13.

It is then the univerſal *Collective Body* of them that profeſs the Goſpel throughout the world which we own as the Catholick Church of Chriſt. How far the *Errors* in Judgment, or miſcarriages in ſacred worſhip, which any of them have ſuperadded unto the Foundations of Truth which they do profeſs, may be of ſo pernicious a nature as to hinder them from an Intereſt in the Covenant of God, and ſo prejudice their Eternal Salvation, God only knows. But thoſe *Notices* which we have concerning the Nature and will of God in the Scripture, as alſo of the Love, Care and Compaſſion of Jeſus Chriſt, with the Ends of his

Mediation, do perſwade us to believe, tha where Men in ſincerity do improve the Abilities and Means of the Knowledg of Divine Truth wherewith they are intruſted, endeavouring withall to anſwer their Light and Convictions with a ſuitable *Obedience*, there are but few Errors of the Mind, of ſo malignant a nature, as abſolutely to exclude ſuch Perſons from an Intereſt in Eternal Mercy. And we doubt not, but that men out of a *Zeal* to the Glory of God, real or pretended, have impriſoned, baniſhed, killed, burned others for ſuch *Errors*, as it hath been the Glory of God to pardon in them, and which he hath done accordingly. But this we muſt grant, and do, that thoſe whoſe *Lives and Converſations* are no way influenced by the Power of the Goſpel, ſo as to be brought to ſome Conformity thereunto; or who under the Covert of a Chriſtian Profeſſion, do give themſelves up unto *Idolatry* and *Perſecution* of the true Worſhipers of God; are no otherwiſe to be eſteemed but as Enemies to the Croſs of Chriſt. For as without *Holineſs no Man ſhall ſee God*, ſo no *Idolater*, or *Murderer*, *hath eternal Life abiding in him*.

Heb. 12. 14. *Rev.* 21. 8.

With reſpect unto theſe things we look upon the *Church of England*, or the Generality of the Nation profeſſing Chriſtian Religion, (meaſuring them by the Doctrine that hath been preached unto them, and received by them, ſince the Reformation,) to be as ſound and healthful a part of the Catholick Church

1 *Joh.* 3. 15.

Church as any in the world. For we know no Place, nor Nation, where the *Goſpel* for ſo long a ſeaſon hath been *preached* with more Diligence, Power, and Evidence for Conviction; nor where it hath obtained a greater Succeſs or Acceptation. Thoſe therefore who *periſh amongſt us*, do not do ſo, for want of Truth, and a right belief, or Miſcarriages in Sacred worſhip, but for their own Perſonal Infidelity and Diſobedience. For according to the Rules before laid down, we do not judge that there are any ſuch *Errors* publickly admitted among them, nor any ſuch Miſcarriages in Sacred Adminiſtration, as ſhould directly or abſolutely hinder their eternal Salvation. That they be not any of them, through the Ignorance or Negligence of thoſe who take upon them the conduct of their Souls, encouraged in a *State* or *way of Sin*, or deprived of due Advantages to farther their ſpiritual Good, or are lead into Practices in Religion neither acceptable unto God, nor tending to their own Edification, whereby they may be betrayed into Eternal Ruine, is greatly incumbent on themſelves to conſider.

Unto this *Catholick Church* we owe all Chriſtian *Love*, and are obliged to exerciſe all the Effects of it, both towards the whole, and every Particular Member, as we have Advantage and Occaſion. And not only ſo, but it is our Duty to live in conſtant *Communion* with it. This we can no otherwiſe

do, but by a Profeſſion of *that Faith*, whereby it becomes the Church of Chriſt in the notion under Conſideration. For any *failure herein*, we are not that we know of charged by any Perſons of Modeſty or Sobriety. The Reflections that have been made of late by ſome on the *Doctrines we teach or own*, do fall as ſeverely on the Generality of the *Church of England*, (at leaſt until within a few years laſt paſt) as they do on us. And we ſhall not need to owne any *eſpecial Concernment* in them, until they are publickly diſcountenanced by others. Such are the Doctrines concerning Gods *Eternal Decrees*, *Juſtification by Faith*, the *Loſs of Original Grace*, and the *Corruption of Nature*, the *Nature of Regeneration*, the *Power and Efficacy of Grace* in the Converſion of Sinners, that we ſay not of the *Trinity* and *ſatisfaction of Chriſt*. But we do not think that the Doctrines publickly taught and owned among us, ever ſince the *Reformation*, will receive any great dammage by the impotent aſſaults of ſome few; eſpecially conſidering their mannagement of thoſe aſſaults, by *tales*, *railing*, and *ralliery*, to the laſting reproach of the Religion which themſelves profeſs, be it what it will.

Thirdly, The Church of Chriſt, or the *viſible Profeſſors* of the Goſpel in the world, may be conſidered as they are diſpoſed of by Providence, or their own choyce, in *Particular Churches*. Theſe at preſent are of many ſorts,

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or are eſteemed ſo to be. For whereas the Lord Chriſt hath inſtituted ſundry ſolemn Ordinances of Divine Worſhip to be obſerved joyntly by his Diſciples, unto his honour and their edification, this could not be done but in ſuch *Societies*, Communities, or Aſſemblies of them to that purpoſe. And as none of them can be duly performed, but in and by ſuch *Societies*; ſo ſome of them do either expreſs the Union, Love, and common Hope that is among them, or do conſiſt in the means of their preſervation. Of this latter ſort are all the wayes whereby the *Power of Chriſt* is acted in the Diſcipline of the Churches. Wherefore we believe that our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, as the King, Ruler, and Lawgiver of his Church, hath ordained that all his Diſciples, all perſons belonging unto his Church in the former notions of it, ſhould be *gathered* into diſtinct Societies, and become as Flocks of Sheep in ſeveral Folds, under the eye of their Great Shepherd, and the reſpective Conducts of thoſe employed under him. And this conjunction of Profeſſors in and unto *particular Churches*, for the celebration of the Ordinances of ſacred Worſhip appointed by Chriſt, and the participation of his Inſtitutions for their edification, is not a matter of *accident*, or meerly under the diſpoſal of *common Providence*; but is to be an act in them of choice, and voluntary obedience unto the commands of Chriſt. By ſome *this Duty* is more expreſly attended unto than by others;

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and by ſome it is totally neglected. For neither antecedently nor conſequentially unto ſuch their *Conjunction*, do they conſider what is their duty unto the Lord Chriſt therein, nor what is moſt meet for their own edification: They go in theſe things with *others*, according to the cuſtome of the Times and Places wherein they live, confounding their Civil and ſpiritual Relations. And theſe we cannot but judge to *walk irregularly*, through ignorance, miſtakes, or prejudices: Neither will they in their leaſt ſecular concernments, behave themſelves with ſo much regardleſneſs ot negligence. For however their Lot previouſly unto their own choyce, may be caſt into any place or *Society*, they will make an after-judgment whether it be to their advantage, according to the Rules of prudence, and by that judgment either abide in their *firſt ſtation*, or otherwiſe diſpoſe of themſelves. But a Liberty of this nature regulated by the Goſpel, to be exerciſed in and about the great concernments of mens ſouls, is by many denyed, and by moſt neglected. Hence it is come to paſs, that the *Societies of Chriſtians* are for the moſt part meer effects of their Political Diſtributions by Civil Lawes, aiming principally at other ends and purpoſes. It is not denyed but that *Civil Diſtributions* of Profeſſors of the Goſpel, may be ſubſervient unto the ends of Religious Societies and Aſſemblies: But when they are made a means to take off the minds of men from all regard

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to the Authority of the Lord Chriſt, inſtituting and appointing ſuch Societies, they are of no ſmall diſadvantage unto true Church-Communion and Love.

The Inſtitution of theſe Churches, and the Rules for their diſpoſal and Government throughout the world, are the ſame, *ſtable* and unalterable. And hence there was in the firſt Churches, planted by the Apoſtles, and thoſe who next ſucceeded them in the care of that work, great *Peace, Union and Agreement*. For they were all gathered and planted alike, according unto the Inſtitution of Chriſt; all *regulated* and ordered by the ſame common Rule. Men had not yet found out thoſe things which were the *Cauſes of Differences* in after-Ages, and which yet continue ſo to be. Where there was any difference, it was for the moſt part on the account of ſome noyſom fooliſh *Phantaſtical Opinions*, vented by Impoſtors, in direct oppoſition to the Scripture, which the generality of Chriſtians did with one conſent abhor. But on various occaſions, and by ſundry degrees, there came to be great variety in the conceptions of men about theſe *Particular Churches* appointed for the Seat and Subject of all Goſpel Ordinances, and wherein they were authoritatively to be adminiſtred in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt: For the Church in neither of the *former notions* is capable of ſuch adminiſtrations. Some therefore reſted in *particular Aſſemblies*, or ſuch Societies, who did or might meet together under

Act. 14, 23. *Chap.* 20. 28. 1 *Pet.* 5. 1, 2, 3. *Act.* 15. 2 *Phil.* 1. 1.

der the guidance and inſpection of their own Elders, Overſeers, Guides, or Biſhops: And hereunto they added the occaſional meetings of thoſe *Elders* and others, to adviſe and determine in common about the eſpecial neceſſities of any particular Church, or the general concernments of more of them, as the matter might require. Theſe in name, and ſome kind of reſemblance, are continued throughout the World in *Parochial* Aſſemblies. Others ſuppoſe a particular Church to be ſuch a one as is now called *Dioceſan*; though that name in its firſt uſe and application to Church Affairs was of a larger extent, than what it is now applyed unto, for it was of old the name of a *Patriarchal* Church. And herein the ſole Rule, Guidance, and *Authoritative inſpection* of many, perhaps a multitude of particular Churches, aſſembling for ſacred Worſhip and the Adminiſtration of Goſpel Ordinances diſtinctly, is committed unto *one man*, whom in contradiſtinction from others they call the *Biſhop*. For the joyning of others with him, or their ſubordination unto him in the exerciſe of Juriſdiction, hinders not, but that the ſole *Eccleſiaſtical Power of the Dioceſs*, may be thought to reſide in him alone: For thoſe others do either act in his name, or by power derived from him, or have no pretence unto any Authority *meerly Eccleſiaſtical*; however in common uſe, what they exerciſed may be ſo termed. But the nature of ſuch Churches, with the *Rule and Diſcipline* exer-

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ciſed in them and over them, is too well known to be here inſiſted on. Some reſt not here; but unto theſe *Dioceſan* adde *Metropolitical* Churches, which alſo are eſteemed particular Churches, though it be uncertain by what warrant, or on what grounds. In theſe *one perſon* hath in ſome kind of Reſemblance, a reſpect unto, and over the *Dioceſan Biſhops*, like that which they have over the Miniſters of Particular Aſſemblies. But theſe things being animated and regulated by certain Arbitrary Rules and *Canons*, or Civil Laws of the Nations, the due bounds and extent of their power cannot be taken from any *Nature* or Conſtitution peculiar unto them. And therefore are there, where-ever they are admitted, various *Degrees* in their Elevation. But how much or little the Goſpel is concerned in theſe things, is eaſie for any one to judge. Neither is it by wiſe men pretended to be ſo, any further, than that as they ſuppoſe, it hath left ſuch things to be ordered by humane wiſdome, for an expediency unto ſome certain ends. One or more of theſe *Metropolitical Churches*, have been required in latter Ages, to conſtitute a *Church National*. Though the truth is, that *Apellation* had originally another occaſion; whereunto the invention of theſe *Metropolitical Churches* was accommodated: For it aroſe not from any reſpect unto Eccleſiaſtical Order or Rule, but unto the ſupream *Political Power*, whereunto the Inhabitants of ſuch a *Nation* as gives

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Denomination to the Church, are Civilly ſubject. Hence that which was *Provincial* at the firſt Erection of this Fabrick, which was in the *Romiſh Empire*, whilſt the whole was under the power of one Monarch, became *National* when the ſeveral Provinces were turned into Kingdomes, with abſolute Soveraign power among themſelves, wholly independent of any other. And he who in his own Perſon and Authority, would erect an *Eccleſiaſtical Image* of that demoliſhed Empire, will allow of ſuch *Provincial Churches* as have a dependance upon himſelf; but cares not to hear of ſuch *National Churches*, as in their firſt notion include a Soveraign Power unto all intents and purpoſes within themſelves. So the *Church of England* became *National* in the dayes of King *Henry the Eighth*, which before was but *Provincial*.

Moreover, the conſent of many had prevailed, that there ſhould be *Patriarchal Churches*, comprehending under their Inſpection and Juriſdiction many of theſe *Metropolitical* and Provincial Churches. And theſe alſo were looked on as Particular; for from their firſt invention there having been *four* or *five* of them, no one of them could be imagined to comprize the Catholick Church; although thoſe who preſided in them, according to the pride and vanity of the declining Ages of the Church, ſtiled themſelves *Oecumenical* and *Catholick*. Things being carried thus far, about the Fifth and Sixth Century of years af-

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ter Chriſt, *One* owned as Principal or chief of this latter ſort, ſet up for a Church denominated *Papal*, from a Title he had appropriated unto himſelf. For by Artifices innumerable he ceaſed not from endeavouring to ſubject all thoſe other Churches and their Rulers unto himſelf: And by the advantage of his *Pre-eminence* over the other *Patriarks*, as theirs over *Metropolitans*, and ſo downwards, whereby all Chriſtians were imagined to be comprized within the Precincts of ſome of them, he fell into a claim of a Soveraignty over the whole Body of Chriſtianity, and every particular member thereunto belonging. This he could have had no pretence for, but that he thought them caſt into ſuch an *Order*, as that he might poſſeſs them on the ſame grounds, on which that Order it ſelf was framed: For had not *Dioceſan*, *Metropolitical*, and *Patriarchal* Churches made way for it, the thought of a *Church Papal*, comprehenſive of all believers, had never befallen the minds of mind. For it is known, that the prodigious Empire which the *Pope* claimed and had obtained over Chriſtianity, was an emergency of the conteſts that fell out among the Leaders of the greater ſorts of Churches, about the Rights, Titles, and Pre-eminences among themſelves, with ſome other occaſional and inteſtine Diſtempers. Only he had one ſingular advantage for the promotion of his Pretenſe and deſire. For whereas this whole *contiguation of Churchts* into all theſe Storyes, in the

the top whereof he emerged and lifted up himſelf, was nothing but an accommodation of the Church and its Affairs unto the Government of the *Roman Empire*, or the ſetting up of an *Eccleſiaſtical Image* and Repreſentation of its Secular Power and Rule, the centring therein of all ſubordinate Powers and Orders in *one Monarch*, inclined the minds of men to comply with his Deſign, as very reaſonable. Hence the principal Plea for that Power *over the whole Church* which at preſent he claims, lyes in this, that the Government of it ought to be *Monarchial*. And therein conſiſts a chief part of the myſtery of this whole work; that whereas this Fabrick of Church Rule was erected in imitation of, and complyance with the *Roman Empire*; that he could never effect his Soveraignty whilſt that Empire ſtood in its ſtrength and union, under the command of one or more Emperours by conſent; yet when that Empire was deſtroyed, and the Provinces thereof became parcelled out unto ſeveral Nations, who erected abſolute independent Soveraignties among themſelves, he was able by the Reputation he had before obtained, ſo to improve all *emergencies* and advantages, as to gather all theſe new Kingdomes into one *Religious Empire* under himſelf, by their common conſent. In the mean time, by the Original *Diviſions of the Empire*, and the Revolutions that happened afterwards amongſt the Nations of the World, the greateſt number of Chriſtians

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were wholly inconcerned in this new *Church Sovereignty* which was erected in the Weſtern Provinces of that Empire. So was the Myſtery of Iniquity conſummated; for whereas the *Pope*, to ſecure his *new Acquiſitions*, endeavoured to empale the Title and Priviledges of the *Catholick* Church, unto thoſe Chriſtians which profeſſed Obedience unto himſelf, unto an excluſion of a greater number; there enſued ſuch a confuſion of the *Catholick*, and a *particular Church*, as that both of them were almoſt utterly loſt.

Concerning theſe ſeveral ſorts of *conceited particular Churches*, it is evident that ſome of them, as to their nature and kind, have no Inſtitution in, nor warrant from the Scripture, but were *Prudential Contrivances* of the men of the Dayes wherein they were firſt formed; which they effected by various degrees, under the conduct of an Apprehenſion, that they tended unto the increaſe of Concord and Order among Chriſtians. Whether really and effectually they have attained *that end*, the event hath long ſince manifeſted. And it will be one day acknowledged, that no *Religious Union or Order* among Chriſtians will be laſting, and of ſpiritual uſe or advantage unto them, but what is appointed and deſigned for them by Jeſus Chriſt. The truth is, the mutual inteſtine Differences and Conteſts among them who firſt poſſeſſed the *Rule of ſuch Churches*, about their Dignities, Pre-eminences, Priviledges, and Juriſdictions,

riſdictions, which firſt apparently let in Pride, Ambition, Revenge, and Hatred, into the Minds and Lives of Church-Guides, loſt in the peace of Chriſtendome; and the degeneracy of the r *Succeſſors* more and more, into a ſecular Intereſt and worldly frame of Spirit, is one great means of continuing us at a loſs for its retrival.

How far any man may be obliged in Conſcience unto *communion* with theſe Churches in thoſe things wherein they are ſuch, and as ſuch behave themſelves in all their Rule and Adminiſtrations, may be enquired into by them who are concerned. What reſpect we have unto them, or what *Duty* we may owe them, as they may in any place be eſtabliſhed by the Civil Laws of the Supream Magiſtrate, is not of our preſent conſideration. But whereas in their *Original* and *Riſe*, they have no other warrant, but the *Prudential contrivance* of ſome men, who unqueſtionably might be variouſly influenced by *corrupt Prejudices* and Affections in the finding out and mannagement of their Inventions; what ground there is for holding a Religious communion with them, and wherein ſuch communion may conſiſt, is not eaſie to be declared. For the notion that the Church-communion of the generality of Chriſtians and Miniſters, conſiſts only in a *quiet ſubjection* unto them, who by any means may pretend to be ſet over them, and claim a right to rule them, is fond and impious. In the mean time

time, we wholly deny, that the Miſtakes or Diſorders of Chriſtians in complying with, or joyning themſelves unto ſuch Churches as have no warrantable inſtitution, ought to be any cauſe of the diminiſhing of our Love towards them, or of withdrawing it from them. For notwithſtanding their *Errors* and Wanderings from the Paths of Truth in this Matter, they do, or may continue intereſted in all that Love which is due from us unto the Church of Chriſt, upon the double account before inſiſted on: For they may be yet perſons *born of God, united unto Chriſt*, made partakers of his Spirit, and ſo belong to the *Church Catholick, Myſtical*, which is the firſt principal Object of all Chriſtian Love and Charity. The *Errors* wherewith they are ſuppoſed to be overtaken, may befal any perſons under thoſe Qualifications, the admittance of them, though *culpable*, being not inconſiſtent with a ſtate of Grace and acceptation with God. And they may alſo by a due profeſſion of the fundamental Truths of the Goſpel, evince themſelves to be profeſſed Subjects of the viſible Kingdom of Chriſt in the world, and ſo belong to the *Church Catholick, viſibly profeſſing*; under which notion, the Diſciples of Chriſt are in the next place commended unto our Love. And it is the fondeſt imagination in the world, that we muſt of neceſſity *want Love* towards all thoſe with whom we cannot join in all acts of Religious Worſhip; or that there

need be any *Schiſme* between them and us, on the ſole account thereof, taking *Schiſme* in the common received notion of it. If we bear unkindneſs towards them in our minds and hearts, if we deſire, or ſeek their hurt, if we *perſecute* them, or put them to trouble in the world for their Profeſſion, if we pray not for them, if we pity them not in all their Temptations, Errors, or Sufferings, if we ſay unto any of them *when naked, be thou cloathed*; and *when hungry, be thou fed*; but relieve them not according unto our abilities and opportunities; if we have an averſation to their Perſons, or judge them any otherwiſe than as they caſt themſelves openly and viſibly under the ſentence of Natural Reaſon, or Scripture-Rule, we may be juſtly thought to fail in our Love towards them. But if our Hearts condemn us not in theſe things, it is not the difference that is or may be, between them and us, about *Church-Conſtitutions* or *Order*, that ought be a cauſe, or can be an evidence of any want of Love on our parts. There will indeed be a *diſtinct and ſeparate* practice in the things wherein the difference lies, which in it ſelf, and without other *avoidable evils*, need not on either ſide to be *Schiſmatical*. If by cenſures or any kind of power, ſuch Churches or Perſons would force us to ſubmit unto, or comply with ſuch things or ways in Religious Worſhip, as are contrary unto our Light, and which they have no *Authority* from the Lord

Lord Chriſt to impoſe upon us, the whole ſtate of the Caſe is changed, as we ſhall ſee afterwards.

As for thoſe *Particular Churches*, which in any part of the world, conſiſt of Perſons aſſembling together for the worſhip of God in Chriſt, under the Guidance of their own *Lawful Paſtors and Teachers*, we have only to ſay, that we are full well aſſured, that where-ever *two or three are gathered together in the name of Chriſt*, there he is preſent with them; and farther than this, there are very few concerning whom we are called to paſs any other Cenſure or Judgment. So we hope it is with them, and ſo we pray that it may be. And therefore we eſteem it our *Duty* to hold that Communion with all theſe Aſſemblies, when called thereunto, which is required of any Chriſtians in the like caſes and Circumſtances. Unleſs we are convinced that, with reſpect unto *ſuch or ſuch Inſtances*, it is the Mind of Chriſt that neither among our ſelves, nor in Conjunction with others, nor for the ſake of preſent Communion with them, we ſhould obſerve them in his worſhip, we judge our ſelves under an Obligation to make uſe of their Aſſemblies in all Acts of Religion, unto our Edification, as occaſion ſhall require. But where the *Authority of Chriſt* in the things of ſacred worſhip doth intervene, all other conſiderations muſt be diſcarded; and a compliance therewith will ſecure us from all irregular Events.

It muſt be acknowledged that many of theſe Churches have wofully *degenerated*, and that any of them may ſo do, both from their Primitive Inſtitution, and alſo the ſole Rule of their worſhip. And this they may do, and have done, in ſuch *various Degrees* and ways, as neceſſarily requires a great *variety* in our Judgments concerning them, and our Communion with them. The whole Chriſtian world gives us Inſtances hereof at this Day; yea, we have it confirmed unto us in what is recorded concerning ſundry Churches mentioned in the *Scripture* its ſelf. They were newly planted by the *Apoſtles* themſelves, and had Rules given by them, to attend unto, for their Direction. And beſides, they were obliged in all Emergencies to enquire after and receive thoſe *Commands* and Directions, which they were inabled infallibly to give unto them. And yet notwithſtanding theſe great Advantages, we find that ſundry of them were ſuddenly fallen into *ſinful neglects*, diſorders, and miſcarriages, both in Doctrine, Diſcipline, and worſhip. Some of theſe were reproved and reformed by the *Great* Apoſtle, in his Epiſtles written unto them for that End: And ſome of them were rebuked and threatned by the Lord Chriſt himſelf immediately from Heaven. That in proceſs of Time they have increaſed in their *Degeneracy*, waxing worſe and worſe, their preſent ſtate and Condition in the world, or the Remembrance of them which are now not

Rev. 2. 3.

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at all, with the ſevere dealings of God with them in his Holy wiſe Providence, do ſufficiently manifeſt. Yea ſome of them, though yet continuing under other Forms and ſhapes, have by their Superſtition, falſe worſhip, and *Expreſs Idolatry*, joyned with wickedneſs of Life, and Perſecution of the true worſhipers of Chriſt, as alſo by caſting themſelves into a new worldly Conſtitution, utterly forreign unto what is appointed in the Goſpel, abandoned their Intereſt in the State and Rights of Churches of Chriſt. So are ſundry *faithful Cities become Harlots*; and where *Righteouſneſs inhabited, there dwells Perſecuting Murderers.* Such Churches were planted of Chriſt *wholly noble vines*, but are degenerated *into thoſe that are bitter* and wild. Whatever our Judgment may be concerning the Perſonal condition of the Members of ſuch *apoſtatized Churches*, or of any of them; all Communion with them, as they would be eſteened the Seat of Goſpel Ordinances, and in their pretended Adminiſtrations of them, is unlawful for us; and it is our indiſpenſible Duty to ſeperate from them. For whatever *Indifferency* many may be growing into, in matter of outward worſhip, which ariſeth from ignorance of the Reſpect that is betwen the Grace and Inſtitutions of Chriſt, as that, from an Apprehenſion that all *internal Rligion* conſiſts in *Moral Honeſty* only; yet we know not any other way whereby we may approve our ſelves faithful in our

Mat. 28. 20. Profeſſion, but in the Obſervance *of all whatever Chriſt hath commanded*, and to abſtain from what he condemns. For both our Faith and Love, whatever we pretend, will be found vain, if we endeavour *not to keep his Commandments*.

John 15. 10, 14.

Such was the ſtate of things in the Church of *Iſrael* of old, after the Defection under *Jeroboam*. It was no more a true Church, nor *any* Church at all, by vertue of poſitive Inſtitution: For they had neither *Prieſts*, nor *Sacrifices*, nor any Ordinances of Publick worſhip, that God approved of. Hence it was the Duty of all that feared God in the *Ten Tribes*, not to joyn with the Leaders and Body of the People in their worſhip; as alſo to obſerve thoſe Sacred Inſtitutions of the Law, which were forbidden by them, in the Order that they ſhould not go up to *Jeruſalem*, but attend unto all their *Sacred Solemnities* in the Places where the *Calves* were ſet up. Accordingly many of the moſt Zealous Profeſſors among them, with the *Prieſts* and *Levites*, and with a great Multitude of the People, openly ſeperated from the Reſt, and joyned themſelves unto *Judah* in the worſhip of God, continued therein. Others amongſt them ſecretly in the worſt of times preſerved themſelves from the *Abominations* of the whole People. In like manner uner the new Teſtament, when ſome have deſerted the Title of *Babylon*, becauſe of their Idolatry, falſe worſhip and Perſecution, we are commanded

2 Chron. 11. Chap. 13. 1 Kings 12. Chap. 13.

Rev. 18. 4.

manded *to come out from among them*, in an open viſible profeſſed Seperation, that we be not Partakers of their Sins, and Plagues. But this Judgment we are not to make, nor do make concerning any, but ſuch as among whom *Idolatry* ſpreads its ſelf over the Face of all their Solemn Aſſemblies, and who joyn thereunto the *Perſecution* of them who deſire to worſhip God in *Spirit* and in Truth. The Conſtitution of ſuch Churches, as to their being acceptable Aſſemblies of worſhipers before God, is loſt and diſſolved: Neither is it Lawful for any *Diſciple of Chriſt* to partake with them in their Sacred Adminiſtrations; For ſo to do, is plainly to diſowne the Authority of Chriſt, or to ſet up that of wicked and Corrupt men above it.

Yet all this hinders not but that there may in ſuch *Apoſtatical Churches* remain a profeſſion of the fundamental Truths of the Goſpel. And by vertue hereof, as they maintain the intereſt of *Chriſt's viſible Kingdome* in the world; ſo we no way doubt but that there may be many amongſt them, who by a ſaving faith in the Truths they do profeſs, do really belong to the *Miſtical Church* of Chriſt.

An inſtituted Church therefore may by the *Crimes* and wickedneſs of its Rulers, and the generality of its Members, and their Idolatrous Adminiſtrations in holy things, utterly deſtroy their *Inſtituted Eſtate*, and yet not preſently all of them ceaſe to belong unto the Kingdome of Chriſt. For we cannot ſay, that

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thoſe things which will certainly *annul Church Adminiſtrations*, and render them abominable, will abſolutely deſtroy the ſalvation of all *individual perſons* who partake in them; and many may ſecretly preſerve themſelves from being defiled with ſuch abominations. So in the height of the Degeneracy and Apoſtacy of the *Iſraelitiſh Church*, there were ſeven thouſand who kept themſelves pure from *Baaliſh Idolatry*, of whom none were known to *Elijah*. And therefore did God ſtill continue a reſpect unto them as his people, becauſe of thoſe *ſecret ones*, and becauſe the Token of his Covenant was yet in their fleſh; affording unto them an extraordinary Miniſtry by his Prophets, when the ordinary by Prieſts and Levites was utterly ceaſed. This we are to hope concerning every place where there is any Profeſſion made of the Name of Chriſt; ſeeing it was the Paſſion of *Elijah* which cauſed him to overſee ſo great a *Remnant* as God had left unto himſelf in the Kingdome of *Iſrael*. And from his example we may learn, that good men may ſomtimes be more *ſevere in their cenſures for God*, than he will be for himſelf.

Moreover, ſuch as were *baptized* in thoſe Churches, were not baptized into them as particular Churches, nor *initiated* into them thereby: But the Relation which enſued unto them thereon, was unto the *Catholick Church viſible*, together with a ſeperation from the *Infidel world*, lying wholly in darkneſs

neſs and evil, by a dedication unto the Name of Chriſt. Upon a perſonal avowment of that Faith whereinto they were baptized, they became compleat Members of that Church. Whatever ſtate they are hereby admitted into, whatever benefit or priviledge they are perſonally intereſted in, they loſe them not by the miſcarriage of that particular Church whereunto they do relate: Yea, loſing the whole advantage of an *inſtituted Church-ſtate*, they may ſtill retain whatever belongs unto their Faith and Profeſſion. Were *Baptiſme* only an Initiation into a Particular Church, upon the failure of that Church, Baptiſm as to all its benefits and Priviledges, muſt ceaſe alſo. We do therefore own, that amongſt thoſe whoſe Aſſemblies are rejected by Chriſt, becauſe of their falſe *worſhip and wickedneſs*, there may be perſons truly belonging to the Myſtical Church of God, and that alſo by their Profeſſion are a portion of his Viſible Kingdome in the World. How far they do conſent unto the *Abominations* of the Churches whereunto they do belong, how far they have Light againſt them, how far they do bewaile them, how far they repent of them, what God will bear withall in them, we know not, nor are called to judge. Our *Love* is to be towards them as perſons relating unto Jeſus Chriſt in the capacity mentioned; but all *Communion* with them in the Acts of falſe Worſhip is forbidden unto us. By vertue alſo of that *Relation* which they ſtill continue unto

to Chriſt and his Church as believers, they have Power, and are warranted, (as it is their Duty) to *reform themſelves*, and to joyn together anew in Church Order, for the due celebration of Goſpel Ordinances, unto the Glory of Chriſt, and their own edification. For it is fond to imagine, that by the ſins of others, any Diſciples of Chriſt in any place of the world, ſhould be deprived of a *Right* to perform their Duty towards him, when it is diſcovered unto them. And theſe are our thoughts concerning ſuch Churches, as are openly and viſibly *Apoſtatical*.

Again, There are *Corruptions* that may befall or enter into Churches that are not of ſo heinous a nature, as thoſe before inſiſted on: Eſpecially if, as it often falls out, the whole *Lump be not leavened*; if the whole Body be not infected, but only ſome Part or Parts of it, which others more ſound do reſiſt, and give their Teſtimony againſt: And theſe may have none of the pernicious conſequences before mentioned. Thus many *Errours* in Doctrines, *Diſorders* and Miſcarriages in ſacred Adminiſtrations, irregular walking in converſation, with neglect or abuſe of Diſcipline in Rulers, may fall out in ſome Churches, which yet may be ſo far from *evacuating their Church ſtate*, as that they give no ſufficient Warrant unto any perſon, immediately to leave their Communion, or to ſeperate from them. The Inſtances that may be given of the failings of ſome of the *Primitive*

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Churches, in all theſe things, with the conſideration of the *Apoſtolical Directions* given unto them on ſuch Occaſions, render this Aſſertion evident and incontroulable. Nor do we in the leaſt approve of their practiſe (if any ſuch there be, that are conſiderable) who upon every failing in theſe things in any Church, think themſelves ſufficiently warranted, immediately of their own minds, to depart from its Communion. Much more do we *condemn them* who ſuffer themſelves in theſe things to be guided by their own ſurmiſes and miſapprehenſions. For ſuch there may be, as make their own haſty conceptions to be the Rule of all Church Adminiſtrations, and Communion; who unleſs they are in all things pleaſed, can be *quiet* no where. Wherefore when any Church, whereof a man is by *his own conſent* antecedently a Member, doth fall in part or in whole from any of thoſe Truths which it hath profeſſed, or when it is overtaken with a neglect of Diſcipline, or irregularities in its adminiſtration, ſuch a one is to conſider, that he is placed in his preſent ſtate by divine Providence, that he may orderly therein endeavour to put a ſtop unto ſuch Defections, and to exerciſe his *charity*, Love and Forbearance towards the perſons of them whoſe Miſcarriages at preſent he cannot Remedy. In ſuch caſes there is a large and ſpacious Field, for *Wiſdom*, *Patience*, *Love* and *prudent Zeal* to exerciſe themſelves. And it is

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a moſt perverſe Imagination, that *Seperation* is the only cure for Church-diſorders. All the *Gifts and Graces* of the Spirit, beſtowed on Church-Members, to be exerciſed in their ſeveral ſtations at ſuch a ſeaſon, all *Inſtructions* given for their due improvement unto the good of the whole; the Nature, Rules and Laws of all Societies, declare that all other *Remedies* poſſible and lawful, are to be attempted, before a Church be finally deſerted. But theſe Rules are to be obſerved, provided alwayes, that it be judged unlawful for *any Perſons*, either for the ſake of Peace, or Order, or Concord, or on any other conſideration, to join actually in any thing that is *ſinful*, or to profeſs any Opinion which is contrary to *Sound Doctrine*, or the form of wholeſome words which we are bound to hold faſt on all Emergencies. And farther, if we may ſuppoſe, as ſure enough we may, that ſuch a Church ſo corrupted ſhall *obſtinately perſiſt* in its Errors, Miſcarriages, Neglects, and Mal-adminiſtrations; that it ſhall refuſe to be warned or admoniſhed, or being ſo by any means ſhall wilfully reject and deſpiſe all Inſtruction; that it will not bear with them that are yet ſound in it, whether Elders or Members in peaceable Endeavors to reduce it unto the order of the Goſpel, but ſhall rather hurt, perſecute and ſeek their trouble for ſo doing whereby their *Edification* comes continually to be obſtructed, and their Souls to be ha-

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zarded through the loſs of Truth and Peace; we no way doubt but that it is lawful for ſuch perſons to withdraw themſelves from the Communion of ſuch Churches, and that without any apprehenſion that they have abſolutely *loſt their Church-ſtate*, or are totally rejected by Jeſus Chriſt. For the *means* appointed unto any end, are to be meaſured and regulated according unto their uſefulneſs unto that end. Aud let mens preſent Apprehenſions be what they will, it will one day appear, that the end of all Church-Order, Rule, Communion and Adminiſtrations, is not the *Grandeur* or ſecular Advantages of ſome few, not *outward Peace* and Quietneſs, unto whoſe preſervation the *Civil Power* is ordained; but the Edification of the Souls of men in Faith, Love, and Goſpel-Obedience. Where therefore theſe things are ſo diſpoſed of and mannaged, as that they do not regularly further and promote that *End*, but rather obſtruct it, if they will not be reduced unto their due Order and Tendency, they may be laid aſide, and made uſe of in another way. Much more may any refuſe the communion of ſuch Churches, if they *impoſe on them* their Corruptions, Errors, Failings and Miſtakes, as the coudition of their Communion: For hereby they directly make themſelves *Lords* over the Faith and Worſhip of the Diſciples of Chriſt, and are void of all Authority from him in what they ſo do or impoſe. And it is ſo far, that any

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mens *withdrawing of themſelves* from the communion of ſuch Churches, and entring into a way of Reformation for their own good, in obedience to the Laws of Chriſt, ſhould infer in them a want of Love and Peaceableneſs, or a Spirit of Diviſion, that to do otherwiſe, were to divide from Chriſt, and to caſt out all true Chriſtian Love, embracing a Cloud of ſlothful negligence and careleſneſs in the great concernments of the Glory of God, and their own Souls, in the room thereof. We are neither the Authors nor the Guides of our own Love: He who implants and worketh it in us, hath given us Rules how it muſt be exerciſed, and that on all emergencies. It may work as regularly by ſharp *cutting Rebukes*, as by the moſt ſilken and compliant expreſſions; by manifeſting an averſation from all that is *evil*, as by embracing and approving of what is *good*. In all things and caſes it is to be directed by the Word: And when under the pretence of it we leave that Rule, and go off from any Duty which we owe immediately unto God, it is *Will*, *Pride*, and *Self-conceit* in us, and not Love. And among all the Exhortations that are given us in the Scripture unto Unity, and Concord, as the Fruits of Love, there is not *one* that we ſhould agree or comply with any in their ſins or evil practices. But as we are commanded in our ſelves to abſtain *from all appearance of evil*, ſo are we forbidden a participation

ripation in the ſins of other men, and all *fellowſhip with unfruitful works of darkneſs*. Our Love towards ſuch Churches is to work by Pity, Compaſſion, Prayer, Inſtructions, which are due means for their healing and recovery; not by *conſent* unto them, or *communion* with them, whereby they may be hardned in the Error of their way, and our own Souls be ſubverted: For if we have not a due reſpect unto the Lord Chriſt, and his Authority, all that we have, or may pretend to have unto any Church, is of no value. Neither ought we to take into conſideration any terms of Communion, whoſe foundation is not laid in a regard thereunto.

Moreover, (as hath been declared) there is no ſuch ſociety of Chriſtians in the world, whoſe Aſſemblies, as to *Inſtituted Worſhip*, are rejected by Chriſt, ſo that they have a Bill of *Divorce* given unto them by the Declaration of the Will of the Lord Jeſus to that purpoſe in the Scripture; but that until they are utterly alſo as it were extirpate by the Providence of God (as are many of the Primitive Plantations) we are perſwaded of them, that there are yet ſome *ſecret hidden ones* among them, that belong unto the purpoſe of Gods Grace. For we do judge that where-ever the Name of Jeſus Chriſt is called upon, there is ſalvation to be obtained; however the wayes of it may be obſtructed unto the moſt, by their own Sins and Errors. They may alſo retain that Profeſſion which

diſtinguiſheth them from the *Infidel* world. In theſe things we are ſtill to hold communion with them; and on theſe accounts is our Love to be continued unto them. Some kind of communion we may hold with them, that that are of *no Inſtituted or Particular Churches*, or whoſe Church-State is rejected, even as a perſon excommunicated is to be *admoniſhed as a Brother*. And ſome kind of communion we may lawfully refuſe with ſome true Churches; Inſtances whereof ſhall be given afterwards.

There is therefore no neceſſity that any ſhould deny all them to be *true Churches*, from whom they may have juſt reaſon to withdraw their communion. For ſuch as are ſo, may require ſuch things thereunto, as it is not lawful for them to accept of, or ſubmit unto. What Aſſemblies of Chriſtians we behold viſibly worſhiping God in Chriſt, we take for granted to be *true viſible Churches*. And when we judge of our own communion with them, it is not upon this Queſtion, whether they are *true Churches or no*, as though the determination of our practice did depend ſolely thereon: For as we are not called to judge of the *being of their Conſtitution*, as to the ſubſtance of it, unleſs they are openly judged in the Scripture, as in the caſe of Idolatry and Perſecution perſiſted in; ſo a determination of the Truth of their conſtitution, or that they are true Churches, will not preſently reſolve us in our Duty as

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to communion with them, for the Reaſons before given. But in ſuch a caſe, two things are by us principally to be conſidered. 1. That nothing *ſinful* in it ſelf, or unto us, be required of us as the condition of communion. 2. That we may in ſuch Churches obtain the immediate end of their *Inſtitution*, and our Conjunction with them, which is our *Edification* in Faith, Love and Obedience.

And the things whereof we have diſcourſed, comprize our Thoughts concerning *thoſe Societies* of Chriſtians, whoſe degeneracy from their primitive Rule and Inſtitution is moſt manifeſt and notorious. Whilſt there is any *Profeſſion of the Goſpel*, any ſubjection of Souls unto Jeſus Chriſt avowed, or any expectation of help from him continued among them, we cannot but hope that there are in all of them, at leaſt *ſome few Names* that are written in the *Lambs Book of Life*, and which ſhall be ſaved eternally: For as a *Relation unto a particular viſible Church* walking according to the Order and Rule of the Goſpel, is the Duty of every Believer to give himſelf up unto; as that which is a means appointed and ſanctified to the furtherance of his Edification and Salvation; ſo where it cannot be obtained through invincible outward *Impediments*, or is omitted through ignorance of Duty, or is on juſt Cauſes refuſed where opportunities make a tender of it; or where the being and benefit

of it is loſt through the Apoſtaſie of thoſe Churches whereunto any perſons did belong, the *utter want* of it, and that *alwayes*, is not ſuch as neceſſarily infers the eternal loſs of their Souls who ſuffer under it.

Other Churches there are in the world, which are not evidently guilty of the *Enormities* in Doctrine, Worſhip and Diſcipline, before diſcourſed of. Theſe all we judge to be *true Churches* of Chriſt; and do hope that his promiſed preſence is with them in their Aſſemblies. Anſwerable hereunto is our Judgment concerning their *Officers* or Rulers, and all their Sacred Adminiſtrations. It becomes us to think and believe, that the *one* have Authority from Chriſt; and that the *other* are accepted with him: For it is moſt unwarrantable raſhneſs and preſumption, yea an evident fruit of Ignorance, or want of Love, or ſecular private Intereſt, when, upon leſſer Differences men judge *Churches* to be no *true Churches*, and their Miniſters to be no *true Miniſters*, and conſequently all their Adminiſtrations to be invalid. So do ſome judge of Churches, becauſe they have no *Biſhops*; and ſo do more of others, becauſe they have none. But the *Validity* or *Invalidity* of the Ordinances of Chriſt, which are the Means of Union and Communion with him unto all his Diſciples, depend not on the determination of things highly diſputable in their Notion, and not inconſiſtent with true Goſpel-Obedience in their

their Practice. And we are unduly charged with other Apprehenſions. God forbid that any ſuch thought ſhould ever enter into our hearts, as though the Churches *conſtituted in all things* according unto our Light, and the Rules we apprehend appointed in the Scripture for that purpoſe, ſhould be the only true Churches in the world. They do but out of deſign, endeavour to expoſe us to popular envy and hatred, who invent and publiſh ſuch things concerning us, or any of us: But whatever be the Judgment of others *concerning us*, we intend not to take from thence any ſuch provocation as might corrupt our Judgments *concerning them*; nor to relieve our ſelves by returning the like cenſures unto them, as we receive from them: Scripture *Rule* and *Duty* muſt in theſe matters regulate our thoughts on all occaſions. And whilſt we judge others to be true Churches, we ſhall not be much moved with their judgment that we are none, becauſe we differ from them: We ſtand to the judgment of Chriſt and his Word. We cannot but judge indeed that *many Churches* have miſſed, and do miſs in ſome things the *preciſe Rules* of their due conſtitution and walking; that many of them have added uſeleſs, *ſuperfluous Rites* to the Worſhip of God among them; that there is in many of them a ſinful neglect of Evangelical Diſcipline, or a carnal Rule erected in the ſtead of it; that Errors in Doctrines of importance and danger, are prevalent in ſun-

dry of them; that their Rulers are much influenced by a ſpirit of bitterneſs and envy againſt ſuch as plead for Reformation beyond their meaſure or intereſt; yet that hereupon they ſhould all or any of them immediately *forfeit their Church-State*, ſo as to have no lawful Miniſters, nor acceptable ſacred Adminiſtrations, is in it ſelf a falſe Imagination, and ſuch as was never by us entertained.

In particular, as to thoſe Churches in *Europe*, which are commonly called *Reformed*; we have the ſame thoughts of them, the ſame Love towards them, the ſame readineſs for communion with them, as we would deſire any Diſciples of Chriſt in the world to have, bear, or exerciſe towards our ſelves. If we are found negligent in any *Office of Love* towards them, or any of their Members, in compaſſion, help or aſſiſtance, or ſuch ſupplies in outward or inward things; as we have opportunity or ability for, we are willing to bear the guilt of it as our Sin, and the *reproach* of it as our ſhame. And herein we deſire to *fulfil the Royal Law, according to the Scripture, thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour as thy ſelf*. The ſame we ſay concerning all the Churches in *England* of the ſame mould and conſtitution with them, eſpecially if it be true which ſome ſay, that *Parochial Churches* are under a force and power, whereby they are enjoyned the practice of ſundry things, and forbidden the performance of others, wherein the compliance of ſome

is not over-voluntary, nor pleaſing to themſelves. Neither is there a *Nullity* or *Invalidity* in the Ordinances adminiſtred in them, any otherwiſe, than as ſome render them ineffectual unto themſelves by their unbelief. And this is the *Paganizing* of *England*, which ſome of us are traduced for. We believe, that among the viſible profeſſors in this Nation, there is as great a number of ſincere Believers as in any Nation under Heaven; ſo that in it are treaſured up a conſiderable portion of the *inviſible Myſtical Church* of Chriſt. We believe, that the Generality of the Inhabitants of this Nation, are by their Profeſſion conſtituted an eminent part of the *Kingdome of Chriſt in this world*. And we judge not, we condemn not thoſe, who walking according to their Light and Underſtanding in *Particularities*, do practiſe ſuch things in the Worſhip of God, as we cannot comply withal. For we do not think that the things wherein they fail, wherein they miſs, or *outgo the Rule*, are in their own nature abſolutely deſtructive of their particular Church-ſtate. And what more can reaſonably be required of us, or expected from us in this matter, we know not. The cauſes of the *Diſtance* that doth remain between us & them, ſhall be afterwards enquired into. For our Duty in particular preſential communion, at the celebration of the ſame *individual Ordinances*, with ſuch Churches as are remote from us in *Aſia* or *Africa*, we ſhall we hope be directed to

determine aright concerning it, when we are called thereunto. In the mean time, what are our Thoughts concerning them, hath been before declared: To love them as *Subjects of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ* in the world, to pray for them, that they may have all needful supplies of Grace, and the Holy Spirit, from above, that God would *send out his Light and Truth* to guide them in their Worship and Obedience, and to help them in things spiritual and temporal, as we have opportunity, is the Sum of the Duty which is required in us towards them. Those we are more concerned in, who are within the Lines of our ordinary Communication, among whom we walk and converse in the world: Unto any of these it is in the *Liberty and power* of every Believer to join himself by his own consent: And no more is required hereunto, in the present constitution of Churches among our selves, but that a man *remove his habitation*, to comply with his own desires herein: And this choice is to be regulated by a judgment, how a man may best improve and promote his own Edification. We see not therefore how any man with the least pretence of *Sobriety or Modesty*, can charge us with the want of an esteem and valuation of *Evangelical Unity*: For we embrace it on all the Grounds, that it is in the Gospel recommended unto us. And we do know within what narrow bounds the *Charity and Unity* of some are confined, who

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yet advantage themſelves by a noiſe of their pretence. But that we do not in the leaſt diſturb, break, or diſſent from the *Catholick Church*, either as it is *inviſible*, in its internal form, by Faith and the Renovation of the Holy Ghoſt; or as *viſibly profeſſing* neceſſary Fundamental Truths of the Goſpel, we have ſufficiently evinced. And the Principles laid down concerning particular Churches, Congregations, Aſſemblies or *Pariſhes*, have not as yet been detected by any to ſpring from want of Love, or to be obſtructive of the exerciſe of it. Having therefore thus briefly given ſome account of what we conceive to be our duty in relation unto the *whole Church* of God, we can with confidence and much aſſurance of mind, own as dear a valuation of Love, Unity and Peaceableneſs in the Profeſſion of the Goſpel, as any ſort of Profeſſors whatever. And we are perſwaded that *our Principles* do as much tend and and conduce unto the improvement of them, as any that are, or can be propoſed unto that end. For we either do, or are in a readineſs to embrace every thing or way, that the Lord Chriſt hath appointed, or doth bleſs thereunto.

We doubt not, as hath been before acknowledged, but that there have been many *failings* and *ſinful miſcarriages* among all ſorts of Profeſſors, who *ſeperate*, or are rather driven from the preſent Publick worſhip. There is no queſtion but that in them all, there are

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ſome remainders of the *bitter Root* of corrupt affections, which under the various temptations and provocations they have been expoſed unto, hath brought forth fruit of an unpleaſant reliſh. It is no new thing that *irregular pre udices* ſhould be found acting themſelves in Profeſſors of the Goſpel: It hath been ſo among them from the Beginning. And we hope that where there is, or hath been any guilt of this nature, that the Reproofs which have been publickly given unto it (with what Spirit or Intention ſoever mannaged) may be uſeful to the amendment of them who have offended. But for our own Parts, we muſt bear this Teſtimony unto our ſincerity, that we not only condemn, but abhor all *evil ſurmiſes* among Profeſſors, all raſh and *uncharitable cenſures*, all cauſleſs averſations of Mind and Affections, all *ſtrife*, *wrath*, *anger*, and *debate*, upon the account of different apprehenſions and practiſes in and about the concerns of Religious worſhip. Much more do we caſt out all thoughts of *judging mens eternal ſtate* and condition, with reſpect unto ſuch differences; nor do we, nor dare we, give countenance unto any thing that is in the leaſt really oppoſite to love, Peace, Unity, or Concord, amongſt the Diſciples of Chriſt. And as we ſhall not excuſe any of thoſe *Extravagancies* and intemperate Heats, in words or otherwiſe, which ſome it may be have been guilty of, who until their Repentance muſt bear their own Judgment; ſo we will

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not make a recharge on others who differ in Perſwaſion from us, of the ſame or the like crimes; nor indeed need we ſo to do, their *Principles* and *Practiſes*, contrary unto all Chriſtian Love and Charity, being written as with the beams of the Sun. And we do not complain of our Lot in the world, that the *appearance* of ſuch things iu any of us would be eſteemed a ſcandalous crime, which others that condemn them in us, indulg in themſelves without the leaſt check or controul. The *Law* of this condition is put upon us by the Profeſſion which we do avow. Only we are not willing that any ſhould make advantage againſt us by their Pleas, for Love, Unity, and Concord, as if indeed *they were for Peace*, but that we *make our ſelves ready for warr*. Could they convince us that we come behind them in the *valuation* and *ſeeking after* theſe things by all ways and means bleſſed by Chriſt to that purpoſe, we ſhould judge our ſelves with a ſeverity at leaſt commenſurate to the utmoſt they are able to exerciſe againſt us, whilſt free from malice and evil deſigns. Only we muſt adde, that there is no true *meaſure* of Love, to be taken by the Acceſſions that men can make towards them who depart from Truth. If it were ſo, thoſe muſt be judged to abound moſt with it, who can moſt comply with the practiſes of the *Church* of *Rome*. But we are perſwaded that ſuch *Diſcourſes*, with the application of them unto thoſe who differ from their Authors, do proceed from *ſincerity*

ty in them; only, as we fear, ſomwhat leaven-ed with an apprehenſion that their Judgments and Practices being according unto truth, ought to be the *Standard and Meaſure* of o-ther mens; perhaps no leſs ſincere and confi-dent of the Truth than themſelves, though dif-fering from them. And hence it is unhappily fallen out, that in the Reproofs which ſome do mannage on the foundations mentioned, and in the way of their mannagement, many do ſuppoſe that there is as great an appearance, if not evidence of *evil ſurmiſes*, ungrounded temerarious cenſures, of ſelf-conceit and ela-tion of mind, of hard thoughts of, undue charges on, and the contempt of others, and in all of a want of real love, condeſcention, and compaſſion, as in any things that are true, and to be really found among Profeſſors blamed by them. For theſe things, both as charged and recharged, have a double appearance. Thoſe from whom they proceed look on them in the *light of that ſincerity and integrity* which they are conſcious of to themſelves; wherein they ſeem amiable, uſeful, and free from all offence; whereas others that are concerned viewing of them in the *diſordered Reflections* of their oppoſition unto them, and the diſ-advantage which they undergo by them, do apprehend them quite of another nature. And it is a matter of trouble unto us, to find that when ſome are *ſeverely handled* for thoſe Principles and ways wherein they can, and do commend their Conſciences unto God, and thereby

thereby apprehending that their Intentions, Purpoſes, Principles and Affections, are injuriouſly traduced and perverted, they fall with an *equal ſeverity* on them by whom they are reproved, though their Reproofs proceed from an *equal Sincerity* unto what themſelves profeſs, and expect to be believed in. Eſpecially are ſuch *mutual Reflections* grievous and irkſome unto Men, when they apprehend that in them, or by them, Profeſſed Friends do induſtriouſly expoſe them to the contempt and wrath of Profeſſed Adverſaries.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Want of Love and Unity among Chriſtians juſtly complained of. Cauſes of Diviſions and Schiſms. 1. *Miſapprehenſions of Evangelical Unity. Wherein it doth truly conſiſt. The ways and means whereby it may be obtained and preſerved. Miſtakes about both.* 2. *Neglect in Churches to attend unto known Goſpel-Duty. Of preaching unto Converſion and Edification. Care of thoſe that are really Godly. Of Diſcipline: How neglected, how corrupted. Principles ſeducing Churches and their Rulers into miſcarriages:* 1. *Confidence of their place.* 2. *Contempt of the people.* 3. *Truſt unto worldly Grandeur. Other cauſes of Diviſions. Remainders of corruption from the General Apoſtacy. Weakneſs and Ignorance. Of Readineſs to take offences. Remedies hereof. Pride. Falſe Teachers.*

UPon the whole matter, it is generally acknowledged that there is a great *Decay of Love*, a great want of Peace and Unity among Profeſſors of the Goſpel in the world. And it is no leſs evident, nor leſs acknowledged

knowledged, that theſe things are frequently commanded and enjoyned unto them in the Scripture. Might they be obtained it would greatly further the *Ends of the Goſpel*, and anſwer the mind of Chriſt: And their *Loſs* is obſtructive unto the one, and no leſs diſhonourable unto that Profeſſion which is made of the Name of the other. For the *Diviſions* of Chriſtians (occaſioned chiefly by falſe notions of Unity, and undue means of attaining it) are the chief cauſe of Offences unto them who are yet ſtrangers from Chriſtianity. The *Jews* object unto us the *Wars* among Chriſtians, which they ſuppoſe ſhall have no place under the Kingdom and Reign of the *true Meſſiah*. And we have been reproached with our inteſtine Differences by *Gentiles* and *Mahumetans*. For thoſe who never had either Peace or Love, or Unity among themſelves, do yet think meet to revile us with the want of them; becauſe they know how highly we are obliged unto them. But any Men may be juſtly charged with the neglect *of that Duty* which they profeſs, if they be found defective therein. Under the ſad Effects of the want of theſe things we may labour long enough, if we endeavour not to take away the *Cauſes* of it. And yet in the entrance of our Diſquiſition after them we are again entangled. *Chriſtians* cannot come to an Agreement about theſe Cauſes, and ſo live under the ſeverity of their Effects, as not being able to conclude on a Remedy. The multitude of them is

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here divided, and *one cryeth one thing, another another*: Moſt place the Cauſe of all our Differences in a *diſſent from themſelves*, and their Judgments: Yea they do ſo apparently, who yet diſavow their ſo doing. And it may be here expected that we ſhould give ſome account of our thoughts as to the *Cauſes* of theſe Differences whereof we alſo have *now* complained, ſo far as they are contrary to the nature, or Obſtructive of the Ends of the Goſpel. We ſhall therefore briefly endeavour the ſatisfaction of ſuch as may have thoſe Expectations. Particular Evils which contribute much unto our *Diviſions*, we ſhall not inſiſt upon; much leſs ſhall we reflect upon, and aggravate the failings of others, whether Perſons or Societies. Some of the Principal and more General Reaſons, and *Cauſes* of them, eſpecially amongſt *Proteſtants*, it ſhall ſuffice us to enumerate.

The Principal *Cauſe* of our Diviſions and *Schiſms* is no other than the Ignorance or Miſapprehenſion that is among Chriſtians, of the *true nature of that Evangelical Unity*, which they ought to follow after, with the ways and means whereby it may be attained and preſerved. Hence it is come to paſs, that in the greateſt Pleas for *Unity*, and endeavours after it, moſt men have purſued a ſhadow, and *fought uncertainly, as thoſe that beat the Air*. For having loſt the very *notion of Goſpel Unity*, and not loving the thing its ſelf, under what terms ſoever propoſed unto them, they

they conſigned the Name of it unto, and cloathed with its ornaments and Priviledges a vain *Figment* of their own, which the Lord Chriſt never required, nor ever bleſſed any in their Endeavours to attain. And when they had changed the *End*, it was needful for them alſo to change the *Means* of attaining it; and to ſubſtitute thoſe in their Room which were ſuited to the new Mark and Aim they had erected. Farther to evidence theſe things we ſhall give ſome account of the *Nature of Evangelical Unity*, the means of attaining it; with the falſe notion of it that ſome have embraced, and the corrupt means which they have uſed for the compaſſing of the ſame.

Firſt, that Unity which is recommended unto us in the Goſpel is *ſpiritual*; and in that which is purely ſo, lies the Foundation of the whole. Hence it is called the *Unity of the Spirit*, which is to be *kept in the bond of Peace*; becauſe *there is one Body, and one Spirit, whereby that Body is animated.* Thus all true Believers become *one in the Father and the Son*; or *perfect in one.* It is their Participation of, and quickening by the ſame Spirit that is in Chriſt Jeſus, whereby they become his Body, or Members of it, *even of his fleſh and of his bones*; that is, no leſs really Partakers of the *ſame Divine* Spiritual *Nature* with him, than *Eve* was of the Nature of *Adam*, when ſhe was made *of his fleſh and his bones.* The real Union of all true Believers unto the Lord Chriſt as their Head, wrought by his Spirit

Epheſ. 4. 3, 4. *John* 17. 21, 22.

Eph. 5. 30

2 *Pet.* 1. 4

Gen. 2. 23

which dwelleth in them, and communicates of his Grace unto them, is that which we intend. For as hereby they become one with, and *in* him, ſo they come to be one among themſelves, as his *Body*; and all the *Members of the Body* being many are yet but one Body, wherein their oneneſs among themſelves doth conſiſt. The *Members of the Body* have divers forms or ſhapes, divers uſes and Operations, much more may be *diverſly cloathed* and adorned; yet are they one Body ſtill, wherein this Unity doth conſiſt. And it were a ridiculous thing to attempt the appearance of a dead uſeleſs Unity among the Members of the Body, by *cloathing* of them all in the ſame kind of Garments or Covering. But granting them their *Unity* by their Relation unto the Head, and thence to one another, unto the Conſtitution of the whole; and their different Forms, ſhapes, Uſes, Operations, ornaments, all tend to make them ſerviceable in their Unity unto their proper Ends. And ſaith the Apoſtle, *as the Body is one, and hath many Members, and all the Members of that one Body being many are one body, ſo alſo is Chriſt. For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one Body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.* And he doth elſewhere ſo deſcribe this Fundamental Unity of Believers in one Body, under and in dependance on the *ſame Head*, as to make it the only means of the uſefulneſs and

1 Cor. 12 12, 13.

and Preſervation of the whole. *They grow up into him in all things which is the Head even Chriſt: From whom the whole Body fitly joyned together and compacted by that which every joynt ſupplyeth, according to the effectual working in the meaſure of every part, maketh increaſe of the Body unto the Edifying of itſelf in Love.* The conjunction of all the Members into one Body, their mutual uſefulneſs unto one another, the Edification of the whole, with its *increaſe*, the due exerciſe of Love, (which things contain the whole nature. and the utmoſt Ends of all *Church-Communion*) do depend meerly and ſolely upon, and flow from, the Relation that the *Members* have to the *Head*, and their Union with him. He ſpeaketh again to the ſame purpoſe in the reproof of them who *hold not the Head, from which all the Body by joynts and bands having nourishment miniſtred and knit together, increaſeth with the increaſe of God.* This is the Foundation of all *Goſpel Unity* among Believers, whereunto all other things which are required into the compleating of it, are but acceſſory; nor are they without *this*, of any value or acceptation in the ſight of God. Whatever Order, Peace, Concord, *Union* in the Church, any one may hold or keep, who is not intereſted herein, he is but like a *Stone in a building*, laid it may be in a comely order, but not *cemented* and fixed unto the whole, which renders its ſtation *uſeleſs* to the building, and unſafe unto its ſelf: or like a dead, mortifyed

Eph. 4. 15, 16.

Col. 2. 19

part of the Body, which neither receives any *vital Influence* from the Head, nor adminiſters nouriſhment unto any other part. Now it cannot be denyed but that in the Conteſts that are in the world about *Church Union and Diviſions*, with what is pleaded about their nature and Cauſes, there is little or no conſideration had thereof. Yea thoſe things are principally inſiſted on, for the conſtituting of the *One*, atd the according of the *Other*, which caſt a neglect, yea a contempt upon it. It is the *Romaniſts* who make the greateſt outcryes about Church Union, and who make the greateſt *Advantage* by what they pretend ſo to be. But hereunto they contend expreſly on the one ſide, that it is indiſpenſibly neceſſary that all Chriſtians ſhould be *ſubject to the Pope of Rome*, and united unto him; and on the other, that it is not neceſſary at all that any of them be *ſpiritually* and *ſavingly united unto Chriſt*. Others alſo place it in various Inſtances of Conformity unto, and Complyance with the Commands of Men, which if they are obſerved, they are wondrous cold in their enquiries after this *Relation unto the Head*. But the truth is, that where any one is intereſted in this Foundation of all Goſpel Unity, he may *demand Communion* with any Church in the world, and ought not to be refuſed, unleſs in Caſe of ſome preſent *Offence* or ſcandal. And thoſe by whom ſuch Perſons are *rejected from Communion*, to be held on Goſpel terms, on the account

account of ſome Differences not entrenching on this Foundation, do exerciſe a kind of *Church Tyranny*, and are guilty of the *Schiſm* which may enſue thereon. So on the other ſide, where this is *wanting*, mens complyance with any other terms or conditions that may be propoſed unto them, and their obtaining of Church-Communion thereon, will be of little Advantage unto their Souls.

Secondly, Unto this *Foundation of Goſpel* Unity among Believers, for and unto the due improvement of it, there is required an *Unity of Faith*; or of the belief and Profeſſion of the ſame Divine Truth. For as there is *one Lord*, ſo alſo *one Faith* and *one Baptiſm* unto Believers. And this ariſeth from, and followeth the other. For thoſe who are ſo united unto Chriſt, are *all taught of God* to believe the Truths which are neceſſarily required thereunto. And however by the Power of Temptation they may fall in it, or from it for a ſeaſon, as did *Peter*, yet through the Love and care of Jeſus Chriſt, they are again recovered. Now unto this *Unity of Faith* two things are required. Firſt, a preciſe and expreſs Profeſſion of the *Fundamental Articles* of Chriſtian Religion. For we outwardly *hold the Head* by a conſent unto the *form of wholſome words* wherein the Doctrine of it is contained. Of the Number and Nature of ſuch *Fundamental Truths*, whoſe expreſs Acknowledgment belongs unto the Unity of Faith, ſo much hath been diſcourſed by others,

as that we need not add any thing thereunto. The ſum is, that they are but *few*, *plainly* delivered in the Scripture; *evidencing* their own neceſſity; all conducing to the begetting and increaſe of that Spiritual Life, whereby we live unto God. Secondly, It is required hereunto, that in other things and Duties, every man *be fully perſwaded in his own mind*, and walking according to what he hath attained, do follow Peace and Love, with thoſe who are otherwiſe perſwaded than he is.

Rom. 14. 5.
Phil. 3. 15

For the *Unity of Faith* did never conſiſt in the ſame preciſe Conceptions of all revealed Objects: Neither the nature of Man, nor the means of Revelation, will allow ſuch a Unity to be morally Poſſible. And the figment of ſupplying this variety by an *implicit Faith*, is ridiculous. For herein Faith is conſidered as *profeſſed*; and no man can *make profeſſion* of what he knoweth not. It is therefore condeſcention and *mutual forbearance* whereby the *Unity of Faith* conſiſting in the joynt belief of neceſſary Truths, is to be preſerved with reſpect unto other things about which Differences may ariſe.

Yet is not this ſo to be underſtood, as though Chriſtians, eſpecially *Miniſters of the Goſpel*, ſhould content themſelves with the knowledg of ſuch *Fundamentals*, or confine their Scripture inquiries unto them. Whatever is written in the Scripture, is *written for our inſtruction*; and it is our duty to ſearch diligently into the whole Counſel of God therein

2 *Cor.* 10. 12.

therein revealed: Yea to inquire with *all diligence*, in the uſe of all means, and the improvement of all advantages, with fervent ſupplications for light and aid from above, into the whole *Miſtery of the will of God*, as revealed in the Scripture, and all the Parts of it, is the principal duty that is incumbent on us in this world. Aud thoſe who take upon them to be *Miniſters* and Inſtructors of others, by whom this is neglected, who take up with a ſuperficiary knowledg of general Principles, and thoſe ſuch for the moſt part as have a coincidence with the Light of Nature, do but betray the ſouls of thoſe over whom they uſurp a charge, and are unworthy of the Title and Office which they bear. Neither is there any thing implyed in the means of preſerving the *Unity of Faith*, that ſhould hinder us from explaining, confirming and vindicating, *any Truth* that we have received, wherein others differ from us; provided that what we do, be done with a ſpirit of meekneſs and love: Yea, our ſo doing is one principal means of *miniſtring nouriſhment* unto the Body, whereby the whole is increaſed as with the increaſe of God.

1 Tim. 4. 13, 14, 15, 16. *2 Tim.* 3. 15, 16, 17. *1 Pet.* 1. 10, 11.

But in the Room of all this, what contendings, fightings, deſtructions of men, body and ſoul, upon variety of Judgments about ſacred things, have been introduced by the *Craft of Satan*, and the carnal intereſt of men of corrupt minds, is known to all the world.

Thirdly, There is an *Unity of Love*, that

belongs unto the Evangelical Unity which we are in the deſcription of. For *Love is the bond of perfection*; that whereby all the Members of the Body of Chriſt are knit together among themſelves, and which renders all the other ingredients of this Unity uſeful unto them. And as we have diſcourſed of the nature of this *Love* before, ſo the exerciſe of it, as it hath an actual influence into *Goſpel Unity* among Chriſtians, may be reduced unto two Heads. For, Firſt, it worketh effectually according to the meaſure of them in whom it is, in the *Contribution of ſupplyes of Grace and Light*, and helps of obedience, unto other Members of the body. Every one in whom this Love dwelleth, according to his Ability, Call, and Opportunities, which make up his *meaſure*, will communicate the ſpiritual ſupplies which he receiveth from the Head Chriſt Jeſus unto others, by Inſtructions, Exhortations, Conſolations and Example, unto their Edification. This he will do in *Love*, and unto the ends of Love; namely, to teſtifie a joynt Relation unto Chriſt the Head of all, and the increaſe of the whole by ſupplyes of life from him. Inſtead hereof, ſome have invented *bonds of Eccleſiaſtical Unity*, which may outwardly bind men together in ſome appearance of order, whilſt in the mean time they live in *envy*, *wrath*, and *malice*, biting and devouring one another; or if there be *any thing of Love* among them, it is that which is meerly *natural*, or carnal and ſenſual, working by a joynt

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conſent in delights and pleaſure, or at beſt in *Civil things*, belonging unto their converſation in this world. The love that is among ſuch perſons *in* this world, is *of* the world, and will periſh with the world. But it is a far eaſier thing to ſatisfie Conſcience with a pretence of *preſerving Church Unity*, by an acquieſcency in ſome outward Rules and Conſtitutions, wherein mens minds are little concerned, than to attend diligently unto the due exerciſe of this *Grace of Love*, againſt all Oppoſitions and Temptations unto the contrary: For indeed the exerciſe of this Love requires a ſedulous and painful labour, *Heb.* 6. 10. But yet this is that alone which is the *Bond of Perfection* unto the Diſciples of Chriſt, and without which, all other pretences or appearances of Unity, are of no value with him. Secondly, This Love acts it ſelf by *forbearance* and *condeſcention* towards the Infirmities, miſtakes, and faults of others; wherein, of what ſingular uſe it is for the Preſervation of Church Peace, and Order, the Apoſtle at large declares, 1 *Cor.* 13.

Fourthly, The Lord Chriſt by his Kingly Authority hath inſtituted *Orders for Rule*, and *Ordinances for Worſhip*, to be obſerved in all his Churches. That they be attended unto, and celebrated in a due manner, belongs unto the *unity* which he requires among his Diſciples. To this end he communicates ſupplyes of ſpiritual ability and wiſdome, or the Gifts of his Spirit, unto the Guides and Rulers

Mat. 28. 19, 20. *Epheſ.* 4. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

lers of his Churches, for their adminiſtration unto edification. And hereon, if a ſubmiſſion unto his Authority be accompanyed with a due attendance unto the Rule of the Word, no ſuch *variety* or difference will enſue, as ſhall impeach that Unity which is the Duty of them all to attend unto.

John 17. 20, 21, 22. In theſe things doth conſiſt that *Evangelical Church Unity* which the Goſpel recommends unto us, and which the Lord Chriſt prayed for with reſpect unto all *that ſhould believe on his Name.* One Spirit, one Faith, one Love, one Lord, there ought to be in and unto them all. In the poſſeſſion of *this Unity*, and no other, were the firſt Churches left by the *Apoſtle:* And had they in ſucceeding Generations continued according to their Duty, in the preſervation and liberty of it all thoſe *ſcandalous Diviſions* which afterwards fell out among them on the account of *Pre-eminences*, Juriſdictions, Liturgies, Rites, Ceremonies, violently or fraudulently obtruded on their Communion, had been prevented.

2 *Cor.* 10 4, 5. The *ways* and *means* whereby this *Unity* may be obtained and preſerved amongſt Chriſtians, are evident from the Nature of it: For whereas it is *Spiritual*, none other are ſuited thereunto; nor hath the Lord Chriſt appointed any other, but his Spirit and his Word. For to this end doth he promiſe the preſence of his Spirit among them that believe, unto the conſummation of all things.

Mat. 28. 20. *Joh.* 14. 16.

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And this he doth, both as to *lead* and *guide them into all Truth* neceſſary unto the Ends mentioned; ſo to aſſiſt and help them in the orderly performances of their Duties in and about them. His *Word* alſo, as the Rule which they are to attend unto, he hath committed unto them; and other ways and means for the compaſſing of this end, beſides the due improvement of ſpiritual Aſſiſtances, in a compliance with the holy Rule, he hath not deſigned or appointed.

This is that *Goſpel-Unity* which we are to labour after; and theſe are the means whereby we may do ſo. But now through the miſtake of the minds of men, with the ſtrong influence which carnal and corrupt Intereſts have upon them, we know how it hath been deſpiſed, and what hath been ſet up in the room thereof; and what have been the *means* whereby it hath been purſued and promoted. We may take an Inſtance in thoſe of the *Church of Rome*. No ſort of Chriſtians in the world (as we have already obſerved) do at this day more *pretend unto Unity*, or more preſs the neceſſity of it, or more fiercely judge, oppoſe and deſtroy others for the breach of it, which they charge upon them; nor more prevail or advantage themſelves by the pretence of it, than do they: But yet notwithſtanding all their Pretences, it will not be denied, but that the *Unity* which they ſo make their boaſt of, and preſs upon others, is a thing utterly *forreign to the Goſpel*, and de-

deſtructive of that Peace, Union and Concord among Chriſtians, which it doth require. They know how highly Unity is *commended in the Scripture*, how much it is to be prized and valued by all true Believers, how acceptable it is to Jeſus Chriſt, and how ſeverely they are condemned who break it, or deſpiſe it: Theſe things they preſs, and plead, and make their advantage by. But when we come to enquire what it is that they intend by *Church-Unity*, they tell us long Stories of *Subjection unto the Pope*, to the Church in its Dictates and Reſolutions, without farther examination, meerly becauſe they are theirs. Now theſe things are not only of *another nature* and kind than the Unity and Concord commended unto us by Jeſus Chriſt, but perfectly inconſiſtent with them, and deſtructive of them. And as they would impoſe upon us a *corrupt confederacy* for their own ſecular Advantage, in the room of the ſpiritual Unity of the Goſpel; ſo it was neceſſary that they ſhould find out means ſuitable unto its Accompliſhment and Preſervation; as diſtant from the means appointed by Chriſt, for the attaining of *Goſpel-Union*, as their carnal Confederacy is from the thing its ſelf. And they have done accordingly: For the *enforcing* men by all wayes of deceit and outward violence, unto a compliance with, and ſubmiſſion unto their Orders, is the great Expedient for the eſtabliſhment and preſervation of their perverſe Union, that they have fixed

fixed on. Now that this *Fictitious Unity*, and corrupt carnal purſuit of it, have been the greateſt occaſion and cauſes of begetting, fomenting and continuing the *Diviſions* that are among Chriſtians in the world, hath been indeniably proved by Learned men of all ſorts. And ſo it will fall out, where-ever any reject the Union of Chriſt's Inſtitutions, and ſubſtitute in the room thereof, an Agreement of their own Invention; as his will be utterly *loſt*, ſo they will not be able to *retain* their own.

Thus others alſo not content with thoſe bounds and meaſures which the Goſpel hath fixed unto the *Unity of Chriſtians* and Churches, will have it to conſiſt almoſt wholly in an *outward Conformity* unto certain Rites, Orders, Ceremonies, and Modes of Sacred Adminiſtrations, which themſelves have either invented and found out, or do obſerve and approve. Whoever diſſents from them in theſe things, muſt immediately be branded, as a *Schiſmatick*, a Divider of the *Churches Unity*, and an enemy unto the Peace and Order of it. Howbeit, of *Conformity* unto ſuch Inſtitutions and Orders of men, of *Uniformity* in the obſervation of ſuch external Rites in the worſhip of the Church, there is not one word ſpoken, nor any thing of that nature intimated, in all the *Commands for Unity* which are given unto us, nor in the Directions that are ſanctified unto the due preſervation of it. Yet ſuch an *Uniformity*, being

being ſet up in the room of Evangelical Unity and Order; Means ſuited unto the preſervation of it, but really deſtructive of that whoſe name it beareth, and whoſe Place it poſſeſſeth, have not been wanting. And it is not unworthy conſideration, how men endeavour to deceive others, and are deceived themſelves, by manifold *Equivocations* in their arguings about this Matter. For firſt, they lay down the *neceſſity of Unity* among Chriſtians, with the evil that is in Breaches, Diviſions and Schiſmes; which they prove from the Commands of the one, and the Reproofs of the other, that abound in the Scripture. Then, with an eaſie deduction, they prove that it is a Duty incumbent on all Chriſtians in their ſeveral Capacities to *obſerve, keep, further*, and *promote this Unity*, and to prevent, oppoſe, reſiſt and avoid all Diviſions that are contrary thereunto. If ſo, the *Magiſtrate* muſt do the ſame in his place and capacity. Now ſeeing it is his *Office*, and unto him of God it is committed, to exerciſe his power, in Laws and Penalties, for the promoting of what is good, and the puniſhing of what is contrary thereunto, it is his *Duty to coerce, reſtrain and puniſh all thoſe who oppoſe*, deſpiſe, or any way break or diſturb the Unity of the Church. And this Ratiocination would ſeem *reaſonable*, were it not doubly defective: For firſt, the *Unity* intended in the firſt Propoſition, whoſe neceſſity is confirmed by Scripture-Teſtimonies, is

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utterly loſt before we come to the Concluſion; and the *outward Uniformity* mentioned, is ſubſtituted in the room thereof. And hereby, in the ſecond place, are they deceived to believe, that *external force and penalties* are a means to be uſed by any for the attaining or preſerving of *Goſpel-Unity*. It is not improbable indeed, but that it may be ſuited to give countenance unto that *external Uniformity* which is intended; but that it ſhould be ſo unto the promotion of *Goſpel-Union* among Believers, is a weak imagination. Let ſuch perſons keep themſelves and their Argument unto *that Union* which the Scripture commends amongſt the Diſciples of Chriſt, and his Churches, with the means fitted and appointed unto the preſervation of it, and they ſhall have our compliance with any Concluſion that will thence enſue.

Herein therefore lies the *Fundamental Cauſe of our Diviſions*, which will not be healed, until it be removed and taken out of the way. Leave Believers or Profeſſors of the Goſpel unto their Duty in ſeeking after *Evangelical Unity* in the uſe of other *Means* inſtituted and bleſſed unto that End; impoſe nothing on their Conſciences or Practice under that *Name* which indeed belongs not thereunto; and although upon the Reaſons and Cauſes afterwards to be mentioned, there may *for a ſeaſon* remain ſome Diviſions among them, yet there will be a *way of healing* continually ready for them, and agreed upon by them

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as ſuch. Where indeed men propoſe unto themſelves *different Ends*, though under the *ſame Name*, the uſe of the *ſame Means* for the compaſſing of them, will but encreaſe their variance. As where ſome aim at *Evangelical Union*, and others at an *External Uniformity*, both under the name of *Unity* and Peace, in the uſe of the ſame Means, for theſe Ends, they will be more divided among themſelves. But where the *ſame End* is aimed at, even the *debate of the Means* for the attaining of it, will inſenſibly bring the Parties at difference into a Coalition, and work out in the iſſue a compleat Reconciliation. In the mean time, were Chriſtians duly inſtructed, how, many *leſſer Differences* in Mind, Judgment and Practice, are really conſiſtent with the Nature, Ends, and genuine Fruit of the *Unity* that Chriſt requires among them, it would undoubtedly prevail with them ſo to mannage themſelves in their Differences by mutual forbearance and condeſcention in Love, as not to contract the guilt of being Diſturbers or Breakers of it. For ſuppoſe the Minds of any of them to be invincibly prepoſſeſſed with the *Principles* wherein they differ from others; yet all who are *ſincere* in their Profeſſion, cannot but rejoyce to be directed unto ſuch a *Mannagery* of them, as to be preſerved from the guilt of diſſolving the Unity appointed by Chriſt to be obſerved. And to ſpeak plainly, among all the Churches in the world which are free from Idolatry

dolatry and Perſecution, it is not *different Opinions*, or a difference in Judgment about revealed Truths, nor a different practice in ſacred Adminiſtrations, but *Pride*, *Self-intereſt*, *Love of Honour*, Reputation, and Dominion, with the influence of Civil or Political Intrigues and Conſiderations, that are the true cauſe of that defect of *Evangelical Unity* that is at this day amongſt them. For ſet them aſide, and the real differences which would remain, may be ſo mannaged in *Love*, *Gentleneſs* and *Meekneſs*, as not to interfere with that *Unity* which Chriſt requireth them to preſerve: Nothing will from thence follow, which ſhall impeach their common Intereſt in *one Lord*, *one Faith*, *one Love*, *one Spirit*, and the Adminiſtration of the ſame Ordinances according to their Light and Ability. But if we ſhall caſt away this *Evangelical Union* among the Diſciples and Churches of Chriſt, if we ſhall break up the Bounds and Limits fixed unto it, and ſet up in its place a compliance with, or an agreement in the Commands and Appointments of men, making their Obſervations the Rule and meaſure of our *Eccleſiaſtical Concord*, it cannot be, but that innumerable and endleſs Diviſions will enſue thereon. If we will not be contented with the Union that Chriſt hath appointed, it is certain we ſhall have none in this world. For concerning that which is of *mens finding out*, there have been and will be Contentions and Diviſions, whilſt there

are any on the one ſide who will endeavour its impoſition; and on the other, who deſire to preſerve their Conſciences entire unto the Authority of Chriſt in his Laws and Appointments.

There is none who can be ſuch a *Stranger in our Iſrael*, as not to know that theſe things have been the great Occaſion and Cauſe of of the Diviſions and Contentions that have been among us, near an hundred years, and which at this day make our Breaches wide like the Sea, that they cannot be healed. Let therefore thoſe who have *Power and Ability*, be inſtrumental to reſtore to the minds of men the true *Notion and Knowledge* of the Unity which the Lord Chriſt requireth among his Churches and Diſciples; and let *them* be left unto that Liberty which he hath purchaſed for them, in the purſuit of that *Unity* which he hath preſcribed unto them; and let us all labour to ſtir up thoſe Gracious Principles of Love and Peace, which ought to guide us in the uſe of our Liberty, and will enable us to preſerve Goſpel-Unity, and there will be a greater Progreſs made towards Peace, Reconciliation and Concord, amongſt all ſorts of Chriſtians, than the *ſpoiling of the Goods*, or impriſoning of the Perſons of Diſſenters, will ever effect. But it may be ſuch things are required hereunto, as the world is yet ſcarce able to comply withal. For whilſt men do *hardly believe* that there is an efficacy and power accompanying

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the Inſtitutions of Chriſt, for the compaſſing of that whole end which he aimeth at and intendeth; whilſt they are *unwilling* to be brought unto the conſtant exerciſe of that ſpiritual Diligence, Patience, Meekneſs, Condeſcention, Self-Denial, Renunciation of the world, and Conformity thereunto, which are indiſpenſibly neceſſary in Church-Guides, and Church-Members, according to their meaſure, unto the attaining and preſervation of Gopel-Unity; but do ſatisfie themſelves in the diſpoſal of an *Eccleſiaſtical Union*, into a ſubordination unto their own ſecular Intereſts, by external force and power; we have very *ſmall expectation of ſucceſs* in the way propoſed. In the mean time we are herewith ſatisfied, Take the Churches of Chriſt in the world that are not infected with *Idolatry* or *Perſecution*, and reſtore their *Unity* unto the Terms and Conditions left unto them by Chriſt and his Apoſtles; and if in any thing we are found uncompliant therewithal, we ſhall without repining, bear the reproach of it, and haſten an amendment.

Another Cauſe of the evil Effects and Conſequents mentioned, is the great *neglect that hath been in Churches, and Church-Rulers, in the purſuance of the open direct Ends of the Goſpel*, both as to the Doctrine and Diſcipline of it. This hath been ſuch, and ſo evident in the world, that it is altogether in vain for any to deny it, or to attempt an Excuſe of it. And men have no reaſon to flatter themſelves, that whilſt they live in an *open neglect* of their own Duty, others will always, according to their wills or Deſires, attend with

diligence unto what they preſcribe unto them. If *Churches* or their *Rulers* would excuſe or juſtifie their Members, in all the evils that may befal them through their Miſcarriages and Mal-adminiſtrations, it might juſtly be expected that they ſhould go along with them, under their conduct, whither-ever they ſhould lead them. But if it can never be obliterated out of the Minds and Conſciences of men, that they muſt *every one live by his own Faith*, and every one give an *account of himſelf unto God*, and that every one, notwithſtanding the interpoſition of the help of Churches and their Rulers, is obliged immediately in his own perſon, to take care of his whole Duty towards God; it cannot be, but that in ſuch caſes, they will *judge for themſelves*, and what is meet for them to do. In caſe therefore that they find the Churches whereunto they do relate under the guilt of the *neglect* mentioned, it is probable that they will provide for themſelves and their own ſafety. In this ſtate of things it is morally impoſſible, but that *Differences* and *Diviſions* will fall out, which might all of them have been prevented, had there been a due attendance unto the Work, Doctrine, Order and Diſcipline of the Goſpel, in the Churches that were in poſſeſſion of the Care and Adminiſtration of them. For it is hard for men to believe, that by the Will and Command of Chriſt they are inevitably ſhut up under ſpiritual diſadvantages; ſeeing it is certain that he hath ordered all things in the Church for their Edification. But the conſideration of ſome particular Inſtances, will render this *Cauſe of our Diviſions* more evident and manifeſt.

The

Tne firſt End of Preaching the Goſpel is the *Converſion of the Souls of men unto God*, Acts 26. 17, 18. This we ſuppoſe will not be queſtioned, nor denied. That the work hereof in all Churches ought to be attended and purſued with *Zeal*, Diligence, Labour and Care, all accompanied with conſtant and fervent Prayers for ſucceſs in and by the *Miniſters and Rulers of them*, (1 Tim. 5. 17. 2 Tim. 4. 1, 2.) is a Truth alſo that will not admit of any Controverſie among them that believe the Goſpel. Herein principally do men in Office in the Church, exerciſe and manifeſt their *Zeal* for the Glory of God, their compaſſion towards the Souls of men, and acquit themſelves faithfully in the Truſt committed unto them by the *great Shepherd of the Sheep*, Chriſt Jeſus. If now in any Aſſembly, or other Societies profeſſing themſelves to be *Churches of Chriſt*, and claiming the Right and Power of Churches towards all perſons living within the bounds or limits which they have preſcribed unto themſelves, *this work* be either totally neglected, or careleſly & perfunctorily attended unto; if thoſe on whom it is *immediatcly incumbent*, do either ſuppoſe themſelves free from any Obligation thereunto, upon the pretence of other Engagements; or do ſo diſpoſe of themſelves in their *relation unto many Charges* or Employments, as that it is impoſſible they ſhould duly attend unto it, or are *unable and inſufficient* for it; ſo that indeed there is not in ſuch Churches a due repreſentation of the Love, Care and Kindneſs of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt towards the Souls of men, which he hath ordained the Adminiſtrations of his Goſpel to teſtifie; it cannot be, but that great

thoughts of heart, and no ſmall diſorder of mind, will be occaſioned in them, who underſtand aright how much the principal end of conſtituting Churches in this world is neglected among them. And although it is their duty, for a ſeaſon patiently *to bear* with, and quietly ſeek the Reformation of this Evil in the Churches whereunto they do belong; yet when they find themſelves *excluded*, it may be by the very Conſtitution of the Church it ſelf, it may be by the iniquity of them that prevail therein, from the performance of any thing that tends thereunto, it will increaſe their diſquietment. And whereas men do not joyn themſelves, nor are by any other ways joyned unto Churches, for any *Civil or Secular Ends* or Purpoſes, but meerly for the promotion of Gods Glory, and the Edification of their own Souls in Faith and Goſpel-Obedience; it is altogether vain for any to endeavour a ſatisfaction of their Conſciences, that it is ſin to *withdraw from ſuch Churches*, wherein theſe ends are not purſued nor attainable. And yet a confidence hereof is that which hath countenanced ſundry *Church-Guides* into that neglect of Duty, which many complain of, and groan under at this day.

The ſecond end of the Diſpenſation of the Goſpel in the Aſſemblies of the Churches of Chriſt by the Miniſters of them, is the *Edification of them that are converted* unto God, and do believe. Herein conſiſts that *feeding of his Sheep and Lambs* that the Lord Chriſt hath committed unto them: And it is mentioned as the principal end for which the Miniſtry was ordained; or for which *Paſtors and Teachers* are granted unto the Church, *Eph.* 4. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12,

12. And the Scripture abounds in the Declaration of what skill and knowledge in the *Myſtery of the Goſpel*, what Attendance unto the Word and Prayer, what Care, watchfulneſs and diligent Labour in the Word and Doctrine, are required unto a due diſcharge of the Miniſterial Duty. Where it is omitted, or neglected, where it is careleſly attended unto, where thoſe on whom it is incumbent, do act more like *Hirelings* than true *Shepherds*, where they want skill to *divide the Word aright*, or wiſdom and knowledge to declare from it the whole Counſel of God, or diligence to be urgent continually in the Application of it; there the *principal end* of all Church-Communion is ruined and utterly loſt. And where it ſo falls out, let any man judge what thoughts they are like to be exerciſed withal, who make Conſcience of the performance of their own Duty, and underſtand the neceſſity of enjoying the Means that Chriſt hath appointed for their edification. And it is certain, that ſuch Churches will in *vain*, or at leaſt *unjuſtly* expect that Profeſſors of the Goſpel ſhould abide in their particular communion, when they cannot or do not provide *food* for their Souls, whereby they may live to God. Unleſs all the Members of ſuch Churches are equally aſleep in ſecurity, *Diviſions* among them will in this caſe enſue. Will any Diſciple of Chriſt eſteem himſelf obliged to *ſtarve his own Soul*, for the ſake of communion with them who have ſinfully deſtroyed the principal end of all Church-communion? Is there any Law of Chriſt, or any Rule of the Goſpel, or any Duty of Love, that require them ſo to do? The ſole immediate end of mens joyning in Churches,

being *their own edification*, and uſefulneſs unto others, can they be bound in Conſcience alwayes to abide there, or in the communion of thoſe Churches, where it is not to be attained, where the means of it are utterly caſt aſide? This may become ſuch as know not their duty, nor care to be inſtructed in it, and are *willing to periſh* in, and for the company of others. But for them which in ſuch Caſes ſhall provide according to the Rules of the Goſpel for themſelves, and their own ſafety, they may be cenſured, judged and ſeverely treated by them whoſe Intereſt and Advantage it is ſo to do; they may be deſpiſed by *Riotous Perſons* who *ſport themſelves* with their own Deceivings; but with the Lord Chriſt, the Judge of all, they will be accepted. And they do but encreaſe the dread of their own Account, who under pretence of Church-Power and Order, would *forcibly ſhut up Chriſtians* in ſuch a condition, as wherein they are kept ſhort of all the true ends of the Inſtitution of Churches. To ſuppoſe therefore that every *voluntary departure* from the *conſtant Communion* of ſuch Churches, made with a deſign of joyning unto thoſe, where the Word is diſpenſed with more diligence and Efficacy, is a *Schiſme* from the Church of Chriſt, is to ſuppoſe that which neither the Scripture, nor Reaſon will give the leaſt Countenance unto. And it would better become ſuch Churches to return induſtriouſly unto a faithful *Diſcharge of their Duty*, whereby this occaſion of Diviſions may be removed out of the way, than to attempt their own Juſtification by the ſevere proſecution of ſuch as depart from them.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, In purſuit of the Doctrine of the Goſpel ſo improved and applyed, it is the known and open Duty of Churches in their Guides or Miniſters, by all means to countenance and promote the *Growth of Light, Knowledge, Godlineſs, ſtrictneſs* and *fruitfulneſs of Converſation*, in thoſe Members of them, in whom they may be found, or do appear in an eſpecial manner: Such are they to own, encourage, and make their companions, and endeavour that others may become like unto them. For unleſs men in their ordinary and common converſation, in their affections, and the intereſt which they have in the Adminiſtration of Diſcipline, do uniformly anſwer the Doctrine of Truth which they preach, it cannot be avoided but that it will be matter of *offence* unto others, and of *Reproach* to themſelves. Much more will it be ſo, if inſtead of theſe things, thoſe who *Preſide in the Churches*, ſhall *beat their fellow ſervants, and eat and drink with the drunken*. But by all wayes it is their duty to ſeparate the *precious from the vile*, if they intend to be as the Mouth of the Lord, even in their Judgments, Affections, and Converſations: And herein what Wiſdome, Patience, Diligence, Love, Condeſcention and Forbearance are required, they alone know, and they full well know, who for any ſeaſon have in their places conſcientiouſly endeavoured the Diſcharge of their Duty. But whatever be the *Labour* which is to be undergone therein, and the trouble wherewith it is attended, it is that which by the appointment of Chriſt all Miniſters of the Goſpel are obliged to attend unto. They are not by contrary actings to make *ſad the hearts* of them whom God would

would not have made ſad, nor to *ſtrengthen the hands* of them whom God would not have encouraged, as they will anſwer it at their peril. The hearts of *Church Guides*, and of thoſe who in an eſpecial manner fear God, thriving in Knowledge and Grace under the Diſpenſation of the Word, ought to be *knit together in all holy affections*, that they may together grow up into him who is the Head. For where there is the greateſt evidence & manifeſtation of the power and preſence of Chriſt in any, there ought their Affections to be moſt intenſe. For as ſuch perſons are *the Crown*, the Joy and rejoycing of their Guides, and will appear to be ſo in the Day of the Lord; ſo they do know, or may eaſily do ſo, what Obligations are on them, to honour and pay all due reſpects unto their Teachers, how much on all accounts they owe unto them, whereby their mutual Love may be confirmed. And where there is this *Uniformity* between the *Doctrine* of the Goſpel as Preached, and the *Duties* of it as practiſed, then are they both beautiful in the eyes of all Believers, and effectual unto their proper ends. But where things in Churches, through their negligence or corruption, or that of their *Guides*, are quite otherwiſe, it is eaſie to conjecture what will enſue thereon. If thoſe who are forwardeſt in Profeſſion, who give the greateſt evidence that they have received the power of that Religion which is taught and owned among them, who have apparently attained a *growth* in ſpirituol Light and Knowledge above others, ſhall be ſo far from being peculiarly cheriſhed and regarded, from being loved, liked, or aſſociated withal, as that on the other ſide they ſhall be

be marked, obſerved, reproached, and it may be on every ſlight provocation put even to outward trouble; whilſt men of worldly and propbane Converſations, ignorant, perhaps riotous and debauched, ſhall be the delight and companions of Church *Guides and Rulers*, it cannot be that ſuch Churches ſhould long continue in peace; nor is that peace wherein they continue much to be valued. An Agreement in ſuch wayes and practiſes, is rather to be eſteemed a *Conſpiracy* againſt Chriſt and Holineſs, than Church Order or Concord. And when men once find themſelves hated, and it may be *Perſecuted*, for no other cauſe, as they believe, but becauſe they labour in their Lives and Profeſſions to expreſs the power of that Truth wherein they have been inſtructed, they can hardly avoyd the entertainment of ſevere thoughts concerning them, from whom they had juſt reaſon to expect other uſage; as alſo to provide for their own more peaceable encouragement and edification.

Fourthly, Hereunto alſo belongeth the due exerciſe of *Goſpel Diſcipline*, according to the mind of Chriſt. It is indeed by ſome called into queſtion, whether there be any Rule or *Diſcipline* appointed by Chriſt to be exerciſed in his Churches. But this doubt muſt reſpect, ſuch outward forms and modes of the Adminiſtration of theſe things, which are ſuppoſed, but not proved neceſſary. For whether the Lord Chriſt hath appointed ſome to *Rule*, and ſome to be *ruled*; whether he hath preſcribed *Lawes* or *Rules*, whereby the One ſhould govern, and the other obey; whether he hath determined the *Matter*, *Manner*, and *End* of this Rule and Government

vernment, cannot well be called into Controverſie by ſuch as profeſs to believe the Goſpel. Of what *nature* or kind theſe Governours or Rulers are to be, what is their *Office*, how they are to be inveſted therewith, and by what Authority, how they are to behave themſelves in the Adminiſtration of the Laws of the Church, are things determined by him in the Word. And for the *Matters* about which they are to be converſant, it is evidently declared of what nature they are, how they are to be mannaged, and to what end. The *Qualifications* and Duties of thoſe who are to be admitted into the Church, their deportment in it, their removal from it, are all expreſſed in the Lawes and Directions given unto the ſame end. In particular it is ordained, That thoſe who are unruly or diſorderly, who walk contrary unto the Rules and wayes of holineſs preſcribed unto the Church, ſhall be *rebuked, admoniſhed, inſtructed*; and if after all means uſed for their amendment they abide in impenitency, that they be ejected out of Communion. For the Church, as viſible, is a Society gathered and erected to expreſs and declare the *Holineſs of Chriſt*, and the power of his Grace, in his Perſon and Doctrine: And where this is not done, no Church is of any advantage unto the intereſts of his Glory in this World. The Preſervation therefore of *Holineſs* in them, whereof the Diſcipline mentioned is an effectual means, is as neceſſary, and of the ſame importance with the preſervation of their Being. The Lord Chriſt hath alſo expreſly ordained, That in caſe *Offences* ſhould ariſe in and among his Churches, that in and by them they ſhould be com-

compoſed, according to the Rules of the Word, and his own Lawes; and in particular, that in ſinful miſcarriages cauſing *offence* or *ſcandal*, there be a regular proceeding, according unto an *eſpecial Law* and Conſtitution of his, for the removal of the offence, and recovery of the offendor; as alſo that thoſe who in other caſes have fallen by the power of temptation, ſhould be reſtored by a ſpirit of meekneſs; and, not to inſtance in more Particulars, that the *whole Flock* be continually watched over, exhorted, warned, inſtructed, comforted, as the neceſſities or occaſions of the whole, or the ſeveral Members of it, do require. Now ſuppoſing theſe, and the like Laws, Rules, and Directions, to be given and enjoyned by the Authority of Chriſt (which gives Warranty for their Execution, unto men prudent for the ordering of affairs according to their neceſſary circumſtances, and Believers of the Goſpel, doing all things in obedience unto him) we judg that a compleat *Rule or Government* is erected thereby in the Church. However we know that the *exerciſe of Diſcipline* in every Church, ſo far as the Laws and Rules of it are expreſſed in the Scripture, and the Ends of it directed unto, is as neceſſary as any Duty enjoyned unto us in the whole courſe of our Goſpel Obedience. And where this is neglected, it is in vain for any Churches to expect *Peace and Unity* in their Communion, ſeeing it ſelf neglecteth the principal means of them. It is pleaded, that the *mixture of thoſe that are wicked and ungodly* in the ſacred Adminiſtrations of the Church, doth neither defile the Adminiſtrations themſelves, nor render them unuſeful unto thoſe who are rightly intereſted in them, and duly prepared for the participation of them.

them: Hence that no Church ought to be forſaken, nor its Communion withdrawn from meerly on that account, many of *old* and of *late* have pleaded. Nor do we ſay, that this ſolely of its ſelf, is ſufficient to juſtifie a ſeparation from any Church. But when a Church ſhall tolerate in its Communion, not only *evil men*, but their *evils*, and abſolutely refuſe to uſe the Diſcipline of Chriſt for the Reformation of the One, and the taking away of the other, there is great danger leaſt the *whole Lump be leavened*, and the edification of particular perſons be obſtructed, beyond what the Lord Chriſt requires of them to ſubmit unto, and to acquieſce in.

Neither will things have any better ſucceſs where the *Diſcipline degenerates into an outward forcible Juriſdiction and Power*. The things of Chriſt are to be adminiſtred with the Spirit of Chriſt. Such a frame of heart and mind as was in him, is required of all that *act under him*, and in his Name. Wherefore Charity, Pity, Compaſſion, Condeſcention, Meekneſs and Forbearance, with thoſe other Graces, which were ſo glorious and conſpicuous in him, and in all that he did, are to bear ſway in the minds of them who exerciſe this Care and Duty for him in the Church. To ſet up ſuch a *Form of the Adminiſtration of Diſcipline*; or to commit the exerciſe of it unto ſuch perſons, as whereby, or by whom, the Lord Chriſt in his Rule of the Church, would be repreſented as *furious*, *captious*, *proud*, *covetous*, oppreſſive, is not the way to honour him in the world, nor to preſerve the peace of the Churches. And indeed ſome while they boaſt of the Imitation of Chriſt and his Example, in oppoſition to his Grace, do in their Lives and Practiſes make unto the

the world a Repreſentation of the Devil. But an account of this Degeneracy is given ſo diſtinctly by *Peitro Suave*, the Author of the *Hiſtory of the Council of Trent*, *lib.* 4: *ad Ann.* 1551. that we think it not unmeet to expreſs it in his own words. He ſaith therefore, that, *Chriſt having commanded his Apoſtles to preach the Goſpel and adminiſter the Sacraments, he left alſo unto them, in the perſon of all the faithful, this principal precept, to love one another, charging them to make peace between thoſe that diſſented, and for the laſt Remedy giving the care thereof to the Body of the Church; promiſing it ſhould be bound and looſed in Heaven, whatever they did bind and looſe on earth; and that whatever they did ask with a common conſent, ſhould be granted by the Father. In this charitable office, to give ſatisfaction to the offended, and pardon to the offendor, the Primitive Church was alwayes exerciſed. And in conformity to this, St.* Paul *ordained, that brethren having Civil Suits one againſt another, ſhould not go to the Tribunals of Infidels; but that wiſe men ſhould be appointed to judg the Differences; and this was a kind of Civil Judgment, as the other had the ſimilitude of a Criminal; but were both ſo different from the Judgments of the world, that as theſe are executed by the Power of the Judg who enforceth ſubmiſſion, ſo thoſe only by the will of the guilty to receive them; who refuſing of them, the Eccleſiaſtical Judge remaineth without execution, and hath no power but to foreſhew the Judgment of God, which according unto his omnipotent good pleaſure will follow in this life or the next. And indeed the Eccleſiaſtical Judgment did deſerve the name of Charity, in regard that it did only induce the guilty to ſubmit, and the Church to judg with ſuch ſincerity, that neither in the one any bad ef-*

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fect could have place, nor juſt complaint in the other; and the exceſs of charity in correcting, did make the Corrector to feel greater pain than the corrected; ſo that in the Church no puniſhment was impoſed, without lamentation of the multitude, and greater of the better ſort. And this was the cauſe why to correct *was called to* Lament: *So St.* Paul *rebuking of the* Corinthians, *for not chaſtiſing the inceſtuous, ſaid, you have not lamented to ſeparate ſuch a Tranſgreſſor from you. And in another Epiſtle,* I fear that when I come unto you, I ſhall not find you ſuch as I deſire, but in contentions and tumults, and that at my coming I ſhall lament many of thoſe who have ſinned before. *The Judgment of the Church (as it is neceſſary in every multitude) was fit that it ſhould be conducted by one, who ſhould preſide and guide the action, propoſe the matters, and collect the poynts to be conſulted on. This care due to the moſt principal and worthy psrſon, was alwayes committed to the Biſhop: And when the Churches were many, the propoſitions and deliberations were made by the* Biſhop, *firſt in the Colledge of the Prieſts and Deacons, which they called the Presbitery, and there were ripened, to receive afterwards the laſt reſolution in the general Congregation of the Church. This form was ſtill on foot in the year* 250, *and is plainly ſeen by the Epiſtles of* Cyprian, *who in the matter concerning thoſe who did eat of meats offered to Idols, and ſubſcribe to the Religion of the Gentiles, writeth to the Presbitery, that he doth not think to do any thing without their counſel, & conſent of the people, & writeth to the people, that at his return he will examine the cauſes and merits thereof in their preſence, and under their judgment; and he wrote to thoſe Prieſts, who of their own brain had reconciled ſome, that they ſhould give an account to the people.*

The Goodneſs and Charity of the Biſhops made their Opinion for the moſt part to be followed, and by little and little, was cauſe, that the Church, Charity waxing cold, not regarding the Charge laid upon them by Chriſt, did lean the ear to the Biſhop; and Ambition, a witty Paſſion, which doth inſinuate it ſelf in the ſhew of Virtue, did cauſe it to be readily embraced. But the principal cauſe of the change was the ceaſing of the Perſecutions: For then the Biſhops did erect, as it were a Tribunal, which was much frequented; becauſe as Temporal Commodities, ſo Suits did encreaſe. This Judgment, though it were not as the former, in regard of the Form, to determine all by the Opinion of the Church, yet it was of the ſame Sincerity. Whereupon Conſtantine *ſeeing how profitable it was to determine Cauſes, and that by the Authority of Religion, captious actions were diſcovered, which the Judges could not penetrate, made a Law that there ſhould lie no Appeal from the Sentences of Biſhops, which ſhould be executed by the Secular Judge. And if, in a Cauſe depending before a Secular Tribunal, in any ſtate thereof, either of the Parties, though the other contradict, ſhall demand the Epiſcopal Judgment, the Cauſe ſhall be immediately remitted to him. Here the Tribunal of the Biſhop began to be a common Pleading Place, having Execution by the Miniſtry of the Magiſtrate, and to gain the name of Epiſcopal Juriſdiction, Epiſcopal Audience, and ſuch like. The Emperor Va-*

lence *did enlarge it; who, in the Year* 365. *gave the Biſhop the care over all the Prizes of vendible things: This Judicial Negotiation pleaſed not the good Biſhops.* Poſſidonius *doth recount, that* Auſtin, *being employed herein, ſometimes until Dinner-time, ſometimes longer, was wont to ſay, that it was a trouble, and did divert him from doing things proper unto him; and himſelf writeth, that it was to leave things profitable, and to attend things tumultuous and perplexed. And St.* Paul *did not take it unto himſelf, as being not fit for a* Preacher; *but would have it given to others. Afterwards, ſome Biſhops beginning to abuſe the Authority given them by the Law of* Conſtantine, *that was ſeventy years after, revoked by* Horcadius *and* Honorius; *and an Ordination made, that they ſhould judge Cauſes of Religion, and not Civil, except both Parties did conſent, and declared that they ſhould not be thought to have a Court: Which Law being not much obſerved in* Rome, *in regard of the great power of the Biſhops,* Valentinian *being in the City in the year* 452. *did renew it, and made it to be put in execution. But a little after, ſome part of the Power taken away, was reſtored by the Princes that followed; ſo that* Juſtinian *did eſtabliſh unto them a Court and Audience, and aſſigned unto them the Cauſes of Religion, the Eccleſiaſtical Faults of the Clergy, and divers voluntary Juriſdictions alſo over the Laity. By theſe Degrees, the charitable correction of Chriſt,*

did

did degenerate into Domination, and made Chriſtians loſe their ancient Reverence and Obedience. It is denied in words, That Eccleſiaſtical Juriſdiction is Dominion; as is the Secular; yet one knoweth not how to put a difference between them. But St. Paul *did put it, when he wrote to* Timothy, *and repeated it to* Titus, *that a Biſhop ſhould not be greedy of gain, nor a Striker. Now on the contrary, they made men pay for Proceſſes, and impriſon the Parties, as is done in the Secular Court,* &c.

This *Degeneracy of Diſcipline* was long ſince eſteemed burdenſome, and looked on as the cauſe of innumerable troubles and grievances unto all ſorts of people: Yea, it hath had no *better eſteem* among them who had little or no acquaintance with what is taught concerning theſe things in the Scripture: Only they found an *Inconſiſtency in it* with thoſe Laws and Priviledges of their ſeveral Countries, whereby their *Civil Liberties* and Advantages were confirmed unto them. And if at any time it take place or prevail amongſt Perſons of more Light and Knowledge, who are able to compare it, or the practice of it, with the *Inſtitutions of Chriſt in the Goſpel*, and the manner of the Adminiſtration therein alſo directed, it greatly alienates the minds of men from the Communion of ſuch Churches. Eſpecially it doth ſo, if ſet up unto an *excluſion* of that *benigne*, kind, ſpiritual, and every way uſeful Diſcipline, that Chriſt hath appointed to be exerciſed

ercised in his Church. When Corruptions and Abuses were come to the height in the *Papacy* in this matter, we know what ensued thereon. *Divines indeed*, and sundry other Persons Learned and Godly, did principally insist on the Errors and *Heresies* which prevailed in the *Church of* Rome, with the Defilements and Abominations of their Worship. But that which alienated the minds of *Princes*, *Magistrates*, and whole Nations from them, was the *Ecclesiastical Domination* which they had craftily erected, and cunningly mannaged unto the ends of their own Ambition, Power and Avarice, under the name of Church-Rule and Discipline. And whereever any thing of the *same kind* is continued, that a Rule under the same Pretence is erected and exercised in any Church, after the nature of *Secular Courts*, by force and power, put forth in *Legal Citations*, Penalties, Pecuniary Mulcts, without an open evidence of mens being acted in what they do herein, by *Love*, Charity, Compassion towards the Souls of men, *Zeal* for the Glory of God, and Honour of Christ, with a Design for the Purity, Holiness and Reformation of the Members of it, that Church may not expect Unity and Peace any longer than the terrour of its Proceedings doth over-ballance other Thoughts and Desires proceeding from a sense of Duty in all that belong unto it. Yea, whatever is, or is to be the manner of the *Administration of Discipline* in the Church, about

about which there may be doubtful Diſputations, which men of an ordinary capacity may not be able clearly to determine; yet if the *avowed end* of it be not the Purity and Holineſs of the Church, and if the *Effects* of it in a tendency unto that End be not manifeſt, it is hard to find out whence our Obligation to a compliance with it, ſhould ariſe. And where an outward Conformity unto ſome Church-Order is aimed at alone, in the room of all other things, it will quickly prove it ſelf to be nothing, or of no value in the ſight of Chriſt. And theſe things do *alienate* the minds of many from an acquieſcencie in their Stations, or Relations to ſuch Churches. For the principal Enforcements of mens Obedience and Reverence unto the Rulers of the Church, is becauſe they *watch diligently for the good of their Souls, as thoſe that muſt give an Account*. And if they ſee ſuch ſet over them as give no evidence of any ſuch *watchful Care* acting its ſelf according to thoſe Scripture-Directions which are continually read unto them; but rather rule them with force and rigour, *ſeeking theirs, not them*, they grow weary of the Yoke, and ſometimes regularly, ſometimes irregularly, contrive their own Freedom and Deliverance. *Heb.* 13. 27.

It may not here be amiſs to enquire into the *Reaſons and Occaſions* that have ſeduced Churches and their Rulers into the Miſcarriages inſiſted on. Now theſe are chiefly ſome

Principles with their Application that they have truſted unto; but which indeed have really deceived them, and will yet continue ſo to do. And the firſt of theſe is, that whereas *they are true Churches, and thereon intruſted with all Church-Power and Priviledges, they need not further concern themſelves to ſeek for Grounds or Warranty to keep up all their Members unto their Communion.* For be they otherwiſe what they will, ſo long as they are *True Churches*, it is their duty to abide in their Peace and Order. If any call their *Church-ſtate* into queſtion, they take no conſideration of them, but how they may be *puniſhed*; it may be, deſtroyed, as perverſe *Schiſmaticks*. And they are ready to ſuppoſe that upon an acknowledgment that they are *True Churches*, every diſſent from them in any thing, muſt needs be criminal: As if it were all one to be a *True Church*, and to be in the *Truth and Right* in all things; a ſuppoſition whereof, includes a *Nullity* in the ſtate of thoſe Churches which in the leaſt differ from them; than which, there is no more uncharitable, nor *Schiſmatical* Principle in the world: But in the common Definition of Schiſm, that it is a *cauſeleſs Separation from a true Church*; that term of *cauſleſs*, is very little conſidered or weighed, by them whoſe Intereſt it is, to lay the Charge of it on others. And hence it is come to paſs, that where-ever there have been complaints of Faults, Miſcarriages,

carriages, Errors, Defections of Churches, in late Ages their *Counſels* have only been how to *deſtroy the Complainers*, not in the leaſt how they ſhould reform themſelves; as though in Church-Affairs, Truth, Right and Equity, were entailed on Power and Poſſeſſion. How the Complaints concerning the *Church of Rome*, quickned by the Outcries of ſo many *Provinces of* Europe, and Evidence in matter of Fact, were eluded and fruſtrated in the *Councel of* Trent, leaving all things to be tried out by Intereſt and force, is full well known. For they know that no *Reformation* can be attempted and accompliſhed, but it will be a buſineſs of great Labour, Care and Trouble, things not delightful unto the minds of men at eaſe. Beſides, as it may poſſibly ruffle or diſcompoſe ſome of the *Chiefs* in their preſent ways or enjoyments; ſo it will as they fear, tend to their Diſreputation; as though they had formerly been out of the way, or neglective of their Duty: And this, as they ſuppoſe, would draw after it another *Inconvenience*, by reflecting on them and their Practices, as the Occaſions of former Diſorders and Diviſions. They chuſe therefore generally to flatter themſelves under the Name and Authority of the Church, and lay up their Defence and Security againſt an humble painful *Reformation*, in a Plea that they need it not. So was it with the Church of *Laodicea* of old, who in the

height of her decaying condition, flattered her ſelf, *That ſhe was rich, and encreaſed in Goods, and had need of nothing; and knew not,* or would not acknowledge, *that ſhe was wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* Now it cannot but ſeem exceeding ſtrange unto men who wiſely conſider theſe things, that whereas the Churches which were *planted and watered by the Apoſtles* themſelves, and enjoyed for ſome good ſeaſon the preſence and advantage of their infallible Guidance to preſerve them in their original purity and order, did within a few years, many of them, ſo degenerate, and ſtand in need of Reformation, that our Lord Jeſus Chriſt threatned from Heaven to caſt them off and deſtroy them, unleſs they did ſpeedily reform themſelves according to his mind; that thoſe now in the world, ordered at firſt by perſons fallible, and who in many things were actually deceived, ſhould ſo continue in their purity and holineſs, from Age to Age, as to ſtand in need of no Reformation or Amendment. Well will it be, if it prove ſo at the great Day of Viſitation. In the mean time it becomes the Guides of all the Churches in the world, to take care that there do not ſuch Decays of Truth, Holineſs and Purity in Worſhip, fall out *under their hand* in the Churches wherein they preſide, as that for them they ſhould be rejected by our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; as he threatens to deal with

Rev. 3. 17.

thoſe

thoſe who are guilty of ſuch defections. For the ſtate of the *Generality of Churches* is ſuch at this day in the world, as he who thinks them not to ſtand in need of any *Reformation*, may juſtly be looked on as a part of their ſinful Degeneracy. We are not ignorant what is uſually pleaded in Barr unto all endeavours after Church-Reformation: For, they ſay, if upon the Clamours of a *few humorous, diſcontented Perſons*, whom nothing will pleaſe, and who, perhaps are not agreed among themſelves, a Reformation muſt inſtantly be made or attempted, there will be nothing ſtable, firm or ſacred left in the Church. Things *once well eſtabliſhed*, are not to be called into queſtion upon every ones Exceptions. And theſe things are vehemently pleaded, and urged to the excluſion of all thoughts of changing any thing, though evidently for the better. But *long continued complaints*, and Petitions of Multitudes, whoſe Sincerity hath received as great an atteſtation as Humane Nature, or Chriſtian Religion can give, it may be deſerve not to be ſo deſpiſed: However the *Jealouſie* which Churches and their Rulers ought to have over themſelves, their ſtate and condition, and the preſence of the Glory of Chriſt amongſt them, or its departure from them, eſpecially conſidering the fearful example of the Defection and Apoſtacy of many Churches, which is continually before their Eyes, ſeems to re-

quire

quire a readineſs in them on every Intimation or Remembrance, to ſearch into their ſtate and condition, and to redreſs what they find amiſs: For ſuppoſe they ſhould be in the *Right*, and blameleſs as to thoſe Orders and Conſtitutions, wherein others diſſent from them; yet there may be ſuch Defects and Declenſions, in Doctrine, Holineſs, and the Fruits of them in the world, as the moſt ſtrict obſervation of outward Order, will neither countenance, nor compenſate: For to think to preſerve a Church by *Outward Order*, when its internal Principles of Faith and Holineſs are decayed, is but to do like him, who endeavouring to ſet a *Dead Body upright*, but failing in his Attempt, concluded, that there was ſomewhat wanting within.

Another Principle of the ſame importance, and applied unto the ſame purpoſe, is, that the *people are neither able, nor fit to judge for themſelves*, but ought in all things to give themſelves up unto the conduct of their Guides, and to reſt ſatisfied in what they purpoſe and preſcribe unto them. The imbibing of this *Apprehenſion*, which is exceedingly well ſuited to be made a Covering to the Pride and Ignorance of thoſe unto whoſe Intereſts it is accommodated, makes them impatient of hearing any thing, concerning the Liberty of Chriſtians in common, to judge of what is their Duty, what they are to do, and what they are not to do in things

things Sacred and Religious. Only it is acknowledged, there is ſo much *Ingennity* in the management of this Principle and its Application, that it is ſeldom extended by any beyond their own Concernments: For whereas the *Church of* Rome hath no way to maintain its ſelf in its *Doctrine* and Eſſential Parts of its Conſtitution, but by an implicit Faith and Obedience in its *Subjects*: ſeeing the animating Principles of its Profeſſion, will endure no kind of impartial Teſt or Trial, they extend it unto *all things* as well in Matters of Faith, as of Worſhip and Diſcipline. But thoſe who are ſecure, that *the Faith* which they profeſs will endure an examination by the Scripture, as being founded therein, and thence educed, they will allow unto the people, at leaſt a *Judgment of diſcerning Truth* from Falſhood, to be exerciſed about the Doctrines which they teach: But as for the things which concern the *Worſhip of God*, and Rule of the Church, wherein they have an eſpecial Intereſt and Concern, there they betake themſelves for relief unto this Principle. Now as there is more *Honeſty* and Safety in this latter way than in the former; ſo it cannot be denied, but that there is leſs of *ingennity* and ſelf-conſiſtency: For if you will allow the people to make a judgment in and about *any thing* that is Sacred or Religious, you will never know how to hit a Joint aright, to make a ſeparation among ſuch things; ſo as to ſay with

with any pretence of Reaſon, about theſe things they may judge for themſelves, but not about thoſe. And it is a little too *open* to ſay, that they may exerciſe a Judgment about what God hath appointed, but none about what we appoint our ſelves. But without offence be it ſpoken, this *Apprehenſion* in its whole Latitude, and under its reſtrictions, is ſo weak and ridiculous, that it muſt be thought to proceed from an exceſs of prejudice, if any man of Learning ſhould undertake to patronize it. Thoſe who ſpeak in theſe things out of *Cuſtom and Intereſt*, without a due examination of the Grounds and Reaſons of what they affirm or deny, as many do, are of no conſideration: And it is not amiſs for them to *keep their diſtance*, and ſtand upon their Guard, leſt many of thoſe whom they exclude from judging for themſelves, ſhould be found more competent Judges in thoſe Matters than themſelves. And let Churches and Church-Rulers do what they pleaſe, every man at laſt will be *determined* in what is meet for him to do, by his own Reaſon and Judgment. Churches may inform the minds of men, they cannot enforce them. And if thoſe that adhere unto any Church, do not do ſo, becauſe they judge that it is their duty, and beſt for them ſo to do, they therein differ not much from an Herd of Creatures, that are called by another name. And yet a ſecret Apprehenſion in ſome, that the *Diſpoſal* of the Con-

Concernments of the Worſhip of God, is ſo left and confined unto themſelves, as that nothing is left unto the people but the Glory of Obedience, without any ſedulous enquiry after what is their own duty, with reſpect unto that account which every one muſt give of himſelf unto God, doth greatly influence them into the neglects inſiſted on. And when any of the people come to know their own *Liberty and Duty* in theſe things, as they cannot but know it, if at all they apply their minds unto the conſideration of them, they are ready to be alienated from thoſe who will neither permit them to judge for themſelves, nor are able to anſwer for them, if they ſhould be miſled. For if the *blind lead the blind*, as well he *that is led, as he that leads, will into the Ditch.*

Add hereunto the thoughts of ſome, that *Secular Grandeur*, and outward Pomp, with a Diſtance and Reſervedneſs from the Converſation of ordinary men, are neceſſary in *Eccleſiaſticks*, to raiſe and preſerve that popular veneration, which they ſuppoſe to be their due. Without this it is thought *Government* will not be carried on, nor the minds of men awed unto Obedience. Certain it is that this was not the Judgment of the *Apoſtles* of old, nor of the Biſhops or Paſtors of the Primitive Churches. It is certain alſo, that no *Direction* is given for it, in any of the Sacred, or ancient Eccleſiaſtical Writings. And yet they all of them abound

abound with Inſtructions how the *Guides* of the Church ſhould preſerve that reſpect which is their due. The ſum of what they teach us to this purpoſe is, that in *Humility*, *Patience*, Self-denial, Readineſs to take up the Croſs, in Labours, Kindneſs, Compaſſion and Zeal in the exerciſe of all the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit, they ſhould excel and go before the Flock as their Example. This way of procuring veneration unto Church-Guides by *worldly State*, Greatneſs, ſeeming Domination or Power, was, as far as we can find, an utter ſtranger unto the primitive times: Yea, not only ſo, but it ſeems to be expreſly prohibited, in that Direction of our Saviour unto them, for avoiding Conformity in theſe things unto the Rulers of the world. But thoſe times they ſay are paſt and gone: There remains not that piety and *Devotion* in Chriſtians, as to reverence their Paſtors, for their Humility, Graces, Labours and Gifts. The good things of this world are now given them to be uſed; and it is but a *Popular Levelling Spirit* that envies the Dignities and Exaltation of the Clergy. Be it ſo therefore, that in any place they are juſtly and uſefully, at leaſt as unto themſelves, poſſeſſed of Dignities and Revenues; and far be it from us, or any of us to *envy* them their Enjoyments; or to endeavour their deprivation of them: But we muſt crave leave to ſay, that the uſe of them to the *End* mentioned is vain; and wholly

1 *Pet.* 5. 1, 2, 3. *Acts* 20. 18, 19, 20, 21, 31.

Luk. 22. 24, 25, 26.

wholly fruſtrate. And if it be ſo indeed, that Chriſtians, or profeſſors of the Goſpel, will not pay the *Reſpect and Duty* which they owe unto their Paſtors and Guides upon the account of their Office, with their work and labour therein, it is an open evidence how great a neceſſity there is for all men to endeavour the reduction of primitive Light, Truth, Holineſs and Obedience into Churches: For this is that which hath endangered their Ruine, and will effect it, if continued; namely, an *Accomodation* of Church-Order and Diſcipline, with the State and Deportment of Rulers, unto the Decayes and Irreligion of the people, which ſhould have been corrected and removed by their Reformation: But we hope better things of many Chriſtians, whoſe Faith and Obedience are rather to be imitated, than the *corrupt Degeneracy* of others to be complied with, or provided for. However, it is evident that this corrupt perſwaſion hath in moſt Ages, ſince the days of *Paulus Samoſatenus*, let out and given countenance unto the Pride, Covetouſneſs, Ambition and Vainglory of ſeveral *Eccleſiaſticks*. For how can it be otherwiſe with them, who being poſſeſſed of the *Secular Advantages* which ſome Churches have obtained in the world, are otherwiſe utterly deſtitute of thoſe Qualifications, which *true* Names of the places they poſſeſs, do require. And yet all this while it will be impoſſible to give *one ſingle Inſtance*,

Inſtance, where that Reſpect and Eſtimation which the Scripture tequires in the people towards their Spiritual Guides, were ever ingenerated or improved by that worldly *Grandeur*, Pomp and Domination, which ſome pretend to be ſo uſeful unto that end and purpoſe: For that *Awe* which is put thereby on the Spirits of the common ſort of men; that *Terror* which theſe things ſtrike into the minds of any who may be obnoxious unto Trouble and Diſadvantage from them; that *outward Obſervance* which is by ſome done unto perſons veſted with them, with the *Admiſſion* which they have thereby into an equality of Society with great men in the world, are things quite of another Nature. And thoſe who ſatisfie and pleaſe themſelves herewith, inſtead of that *Regard* which is due unto the Officers or Guides of the Churches of Chriſt, from the people that belong unto them, do but help on their *Defection* from their Duty incumbent on them. Neither were it difficult to manifeſt, what innumerable ſcandalous offences, proceeding from the *Pride* and Elation of Mind that is found among many, who being perhaps *Young* and *Ignorant*, it may be corrupt in their Converſations, having nothing to bear up themſelves withal, but an Intereſt in *Dignities* and worldly Riches, have been occaſioned by this corrupt Perſwaſion. And it is not hard to judge how much is loſt hereby from the true *Glory* and Beauty of the

Church,

Church. The people are quietly ſuffered to decay in that Love and Reſpect towards their Paſtors, which is their Grace and Duty, whilſt they will pay that outward Veneration which worldly Grandeur doth acquire, and Paſtors ſatisfying themſelves therewith, grow neglective of that exemplary Humility and Holineſs, of that Laborious Diligence in the diſpenſation of the Word, and care for the Soules of the Flock, which ſhould procure them that *Holy Reſpect* which is due unto their Office by the Appointment of Jeſus Chriſt. But theſe things are here mention'd only on the occaſion of what was before diſcourſed of.

Another great Occaſion of *Schiſmes and Diviſions* among Chriſtians, ariſeth from the Remainders of that Confuſion which was brought upon the Churches of *Europe*, by that general *Apoſtacy* from Goſpel-Truth, Purity, and Order, wherein they were for ſundry Ages involved: Few Churches in the world have yet totally freed themſelves from being influenced by the *Relicks* of its Diſorders: That ſuch an *Apoſtacy* did befall theſe Churches, we ſhall not need to prove. A ſuppoſition of it, is the foundation of the preſent Church-ſtate of *England*. That things ſhould ſo fall out among them, was of old foretold by the Holy Ghoſt. That many Churches have received a ſignal Deliverance from the principal *Evils* of that *Apoſtaſie* in the Reformation, we all acknow- 2 *Theſ.* 2.

ledge: For therein by ſeveral ways, and in ſeveral degrees of ſucceſs, a return unto their priſtine Faith and Order was ſincerely endeavoured. And ſo far was there a Bleſſing accompanying of their endeavours, as that they were all of them delivered from things in themſelves *pernitious* and deſtructive to the Souls of men. Nevertheleſs it cannot be denied, but that there do yet continne among them ſundry *Remainders* of thoſe Diſorders, which under their fatal Declenſion they were caſt into. Nor doth there need any further proof hereof, than the *incurable Differences* and Diviſions that are found among them: For had they all attained their primitive condition, ſuch Diviſions with all their Cauſes had been prevented. And the Papiſts, upbraiding Proteſtants with their inteſtine Differences and Schiſmes, do but reproach them that they have not been able in an *hundred years* to rectifie all thoſe Abuſes, and remove all thoſe Diſorders, which they were inventing, and did introduce in a thouſand. There is one thing only of this Nature, or that owes it ſelf unto this Original, which we ſhall inſtance in, as an occaſion of much Diſorder in the preſent Churches, and of great Diviſions that enſue thereon. It is known, none were admitted unto the fellowſhip of the Church in the Dayes of the Apoſtles, but upon their Repentance, Faith, and turning unto God. The plain Story of their Preaching, the Succeſs which they had therein,

in, and their Proceedings to gather and plant Churches thereon, puts this out of the reach of all ſober Contradiction. None will ſay, that they gathered Churches of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, that is, whilſt they continued ſuch, nor of *open Sinners*, continuing to live in their ſins. An evidence therefore, and *Confeſſion* of Converſion to God, was unavoidably neceſſary to the Admiſſion of Members in the firſt Churches. Neither will we ever contend with ſuch importune Prejudices, as, under any pretences capable of a wrangling Countenance, ſhall ſet up againſt this evidence. Hence, in the *judgment of Charity*, all the Members of thoſe Churches, were looked on as perſons *really juſtified* and ſanctified, as effectually converted unto God; and as ſuch, were they ſaluted and treated by the Apoſtles: As ſuch, we ſay they were looked on and owned; and as ſuch, upon their Confeſſion, it was the duty of all men, even of the Apoſtles themſelves, to look on them, and own them; though abſolutely in the ſight of God, who alone is the *Searcher of the hearts of men*, ſome among them were *Hypocrites*, and ſome proved Apoſtates. But this Profeſſion of Converſion unto God, by the Miniſtry of the Word, and the mutual acknowledgment of each other as ſo converted unto God in a way of Duty, was the foundation of holy *ſpiritual Love* and Unity among them. And although this did not, nor could preſerve all the firſt Churches

abſolutely free from *Schiſmes and Diviſions*, yet was it the moſt Soveraign Antidote againſt that Infection, and the moſt effectual means for the reduction of Unity, after that by the violent interpoſition of mens Corruptions and Temptations, it had been loſt for a ſeaſon. Afterwards in the *Primitive times*, when many more took on them the profeſſion of Chriſtian Religion, who had not ſuch eminent and viſible Converſions unto God, as moſt of thoſe had who were changed by the Miniſtry of the *Apoſtles*, that perſons unfit and unqualified for that ſtate and condition, of being Members of Churches, might not be admitted into them, unto the diſturbance of their Order, and diſreputation of their Holy Converſation, they were for ſome good ſeaſon kept in the condition of *Expectants*, and called *Catechumens*, or perſons that attended the Church for inſtruction. In this ſtate they were taught the Myſteries of Religion, and trial was made of their *Faith*, *Holineſs*, and Conſtancy, before their Admiſſion: And by this means was the preſervation of the Churches in Purity, Peace, and Order, provided for: Eſpecially were they ſo in conjunction with that *ſevere Diſcipline* which was then exerciſed towards all the Members of them. But after that the Multitudes of the *Gentile world*, in the times of the firſt Chriſtian Emperors, preſſed into the Church, and were admitted on much eaſier terms than thoſe before mentioned, whole Nations came

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and Soul of internal Grace is wanting. Thus it is in this matter, where there is a ſhadow and appearance of *Church-Order*, when the truth and ſubſtance of it is far away. Men come together unto all the Ends of Church-Aſſemblies whereunto they are admitted, but on no other grounds, with no other hearts, nor deſignes, but on and with what they partake in any *Civil Society*, or joyntly engage in any other worldly Concern. And this Fundamental Errour in the Conſtitution of many Churches, is the occaſion as of other Evils, ſo in particular of *Diviſions* among profeſſed Chriſtians. Hence originally was the *Diſcipline of the Church* accommodated by various degrees to the Rule and Government of ſuch perſons, as underſtood little, or were little ſenſible of the Nature, Power, and Efficacy of that ſpiritual Diſcipline which is inſtituted in the Goſpel, which thereby at laſt degenerated into the outward way of Force and Power before deſcribed: For the Churches began to be compoſed of ſuch as could no otherwiſe be ruled. And inſtead of reducing them to their *Primitive Temper* and Condition whereunto the Evangelical Rule was ſuited, there was invented a way of Government accommodate unto that ſtate whereinto they were lapſed, which thoſe concerned found to be the far *eaſier work* of the two. Hence did ſincere *mutual Love* with all the fruits of it begin to decay among Church-Members; ſeeing they could not have

have that tollerable perſwaſion of that Truth of Profeſſion in each other which is neceſſary to preſerve it *without Diſſimulation*, and to provoke it unto a due Exerciſe. Hence did *private ſpiritual Communion* fail amongſt them, the moſt being ſtrangers unto all the ways and means of it; yea deſpiſing and contemning it in all the Inſtances of its exerciſe; which will yet be found to be as the Life and Soul of all uſeful Church-communion. And where publick Communion is only attended unto with a neglect hereof, it will quickly wither and come to nothing: For on this occaſion do all duties of *Watchfulneſs*, *Exhortations* and *Admonitions*, proceeding from mutual Love and Care of each others condition, ſo frequently recommended unto us in the Scripture, utterly ceaſe and become diſuſed. Hence Members of the ſame Church began to converſe together as men only, or at the beſt *Civil Neighbours*; and if at all as Chriſtians, yet not with reſpect unto that eſpecial relation unto a particular Church, wherein their uſefulneſs as *Members* of the ſame *Organical Body* is required. Hence ſome perſons looking on theſe things as *intollerable*, and not only obſtructive of their Edification, but deſtructive unto all really uſeful Church-Communion, we ought not to wonder if they have thought meet to provide otherwiſe for themſelves. Not that we approve of *every departure* or withdrawing from the Communion of Churches, where

1 *Cor.* 12. 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20.

things continue under ſuch diſorders, but only ſhew what it is that occaſioneth many ſo to do. For as there may ſometimes be *juſt cauſe* hereof, and perſons in ſo doing may mannage what they do according unto Scripture-Rule; ſo we doubt not but that ſome may *raſhly and precipitately*, without due attendance unto all the Duties which in ſuch Undertakings are required of them, without that Charity and Forbearance which no Circumſtances can abſolve them from, make themſelves guilty of a blameable ſeparation. And theſe are ſome of thoſe things which we look upon as the *General Cauſes* or Occaſions of all the *Schiſmes and Diviſions* that are at this day found among Profeſſors of the Goſpel. Whether the guilt of them will not much cleave unto them by whom they are kept on foot and maintained, is worth your enquiry, For ſo doth it befall our *Humane Nature*, apt to be deceived and impoſed on by various Pretences and Prejudices, that thoſe are oftentimes highly *guilty themſelves* of thoſe miſcarriages, whoſe chiefeſt ſatisfaction and glory conſiſts in charging them on others. However if theſe things do not abſolutely juſtifie any in a *Seceſſion* from the Churches whereunto they did relate; yet they render the matter ſo highly queſtionable, and the things themſelves are ſo burdenſome unto the minds of many, as that *Diviſions* will thereon undoubtedly enſue. And when it is ſo fallen out, to deſign and contrive

contrive the reduction of all unto *outward Unity and Concord*, by forcing them, who on ſuch occaſions have diſſented and withdrawn themſelves from the Communion of any Church, without endeavouring the *removal* of theſe Occaſions of their ſo doing, and the *Reformation* of thoſe abuſes which have given cauſe thereunto, is ſevere, if not unjuſt. But when the Lord Jeſus Chriſt in his Care towards his Churches, and watchfulneſs over them, ſhall be pleaſed to *remove* theſe and the like ſtumbling-Blocks out of the way, there will, we hope, be a full return unto Goſpel-Unity and Peace among them that ſerve and worſhip him on the Earth.

In this ſtate of things, where-ever it be found, it is no wonder if the *Weakneſſes*, *Ignorance*, *Prejudices* and Temptations of men do interpoſe themſelves unto the encreaſe and heightning of thoſe Diviſions, whoſe Springs and Occaſions lye elſwhere. When none of theſe *Provocations* were given them, yet we know there was enough in *Profeſſors* themſelves to bring forth the bitter fruit of Differences and *Schiſms*, even in the dayes of the Apoſtles. How much more may we fear the like fruits and effects from the like *Principles* and corrupt affections? Now the Occaſions of drawing them forth are more, Temptations unto them greater, Directions againſt them leſs evident and powerful; and all ſenſe of *Eccleſiaſtical Authority*, through its abuſe and male-adminiſtration, is, if not loſt and ruined, yet

1 *Cor.* 1. 11. *Chap.* 3.

yet much weakned and impaired. But from the darkneſs of the minds of men, and their *unmortified affections*, (as the beſt know but in part, nor are they perfectly ſanctified) it is, that they are apt to *take offence* one at another, and thereon to judge and cenſure each other temeariouſly; and which is worſt of all, every one to make his own underſtanding and perſwaſion thereon, the Rule of Truth and Worſhip unto others. All ſuch wayes and courſes are *againſt us* in the matter of Love and Union, all tending to make and increaſe Diviſions among us. And the *Evil* that is in them, we might here declare, but that it falls frequently under the chaſtiſement of other hands: Neither indeed can it well meet with too much ſeverity of reproof. Only it were deſireable that thoſe by whom ſuch reproofs are mannaged, would take care not to give *advantages of Retortion* or ſelf-juſtification unto them that are reproved by them: But this they do unavoydably, whilſt they ſeem to make their own Judgments and Practiſes the ſole Rule and meaſure of what they approve or diſallow. In what *complyes with them* there is nothing perverſe, and in what differs from them there is nothing ſincere. And on this foundation whilſt they reprove, *cenſuring*, raſh-judging and reproaching of others, with pride, ſelf-conceitedneſs, falſe Opinions, irregular practices in Church worſhip, or any other concerns of Religion, backbiting, ealineſs in taking up falſe reports,

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with the like *evils*, as they deſerve ſeverely to be rebuked, thoſe reproved by them are apt to think, that they ſee the guilt of many of the crimes charged on themſelves, in them by whom they are reproved. So on all hands things *gendor unto farther ſtrife*; whilſt every Party being conſcious unto their own *ſincerity*, according unto the Rule of their preſent Light, which is the only meaſure they can take of it, are ready to impeach the ſincerity of them by whom they ſuppoſe themſelves cauſleſly traduced and condemned. This evil therefore is to be diligently watched againſt by all that love Unity, Truth, Holineſs, or Peace. And ſeeing there are Rules and Precepts given us in the Scripture to this purpoſe, it may not be unmeet to call over ſome of them. One Rule of this nature and import, is that *we ſhould all of us ſtudy to be quiet, and to do our own buſineſs*, in things Civil and Sacred. Who will harm men, who will be offended with them, whilſt they are no otherwiſe buſied in the world? And if any attempt to do them evil, what need have they to be troubled thereat? *Duty* and *Innocency* will give peace to a worthy ſoul in the midſt of all ſtorms, and whatever may befall it. Now will any one deny, or can they, but that it is the duty, and ought to be the buſineſs of every man to ſeek his own *edification*, and the ſaving of his ſoul? Deny this unto any man, and you put your ſelf in the place of God to him, and make him more miſerable than a Beaſt. And this

1 *Theſſ.* 4. 11.

this, which no man can forbid, no man can otherwiſe do, than according to that *Light* and *knowledg of the will of God* which he hath received: If this therefore be ſo attended to, as that we do not thereby break in upon the concerns of others, nor diſturb them in what is theirs, but be carryed on *quietly* and *peaceably* with an evidence in what we do, that it is meerly our own perſonal duty, that we are in the purſuance of; all cauſe of offence will be taken away. For if any will yet be offended with men, becauſe they peaceably ſeek the *ſalvation of their own ſouls*, or do that in order thereunto, which they cannot but do, unleſs they will caſt off all ſenſe of Gods authority over them, it is to ſeek occaſion of offence againſt them, where none are given. But when any perſons are acted by a *Pragmatical Curioſity* to interpoſe themſelves in the Wayes, Affairs, and Concerns of other men, beyond what the Laws of Love, uſefulneſs, and mutual Chriſtian aid, do require, tumults, diſorders, vexations, ſtrife, emulations, with a world of evils, will enſue thereon; eſpecially will they do ſo, when men are prone to dwell on the *reall* or *ſuppoſed faults* of others, which on various pretences of *pity* for their perſons, or a *deteſtation* of their evils, or *publick reproof* of them, they will aggravate, and ſo on all occaſions expoſe them to publick cenſures, perhaps, as they think, out of zeal to Gods glory, and a deſire for the Churches good: For the paſſions and intereſts of ſuch perſons, are rea-

ready to ſwell over the bounds of modeſty, ſobriety and peace, though through the blindneſs which all ſelf-love is accompanied with-all, they ſeldome ſee clearly what they do. Would we therefore labour to ſee a beauty, deſireableneſs and Honour in the greateſt confinement of our thoughts, words and actions, *unto our ſelves and our own occaſions*, that expreſs Duty will admit of, it might tend very much to the preſervation of Love and Peace among Profeſſors, for unto this end it is preſcribed unto us.

Secondly, it is ſtrictly commanded us *that we ſhould not judge, that we be not judged.* There is no Rule for mutual Converſation and Communion, in the Scripture, that is oftner repeated, or more earneſtly inculcated: Nor is there any of more *Uſe*, nor whoſe Grounds and Reaſons, are more *evident* or more cogent. Judging and determining in our ſelves, or divulging Cenſures concerning others, their *Perſons, States*, and *Conditions* towards God, their Principles as to truth and ſincerity, their ways as to Righteouſneſs and Holineſs, whether paſt or preſent, any otherwiſe than by the perfect Law of Liberty, and that only when we are called thereunto in a way of Duty, is the Poyſon of *common Love* and Peace, and the ruine of all Communion and Society, be it of what Nature it will. For us to judge and determine whether theſe or thoſe Churches are *true Churches* or no, whether ſuch Perſons are *Godly* or no, whether

Mat. 6. 1. 2. *Luke* 6. 37. *Rom.* 14. 3. 4. 10. *Jam.* 4. 12.

ther ſuch of their Principles and actions are regular or no, and ſo condemn them in our Minds, (unleſs where open wickedneſs will juſtifie the ſevereſt Reflections) is to *ſpeak Evil of the Law*, and to make our ſelves Judges of it, as well as of them who together with our ſelves are to be judged by it. Nor is a judgment of that Nature neceſſary unto our Advantage in the *Diſcharge of any Duty* required at our hands. We may order all our Concernments towards Churches and Perſons without making any *ſuch Judgment* concerning them. But ſo ſtrong is the Inclination of ſome Perſons unto an *Exceſs* in this kind, that no conſideration can prevail with them to caſt it out according to its deſert. Whether they do it as approving and juſtifying themſelves in what they condemn in others, or as a thing conducing unto their Intereſt, or out of *Faction* and an eſpecial Love to ſome one Party of Men, or ſome ſecret Animoſities and hatred againſt others, it is a matter they ſeldome well quit themſelves of, whilſt they are in this world. Yea ſo far do ſome ſuffer themſelves to be tranſported, as that they cannot reſtrain from charging of others with the Guilt of ſuch things as they know to be *charged on themſelves*, by them who pretend to be the only competent Judges in ſuch Caſes. And ſo will they alſo reflect upon, and complain of other men for Miſcarriages by *ſeverities*, in Inſtances exceedingly inferior, as by themſelves

ſelves repreſented, unto what it is known they were ingaged in. But men are apt to think well of all they do themſelves, or thoſe whom they peculiarly regard, and to aggravate whatever they conceive amiſs in ſuch as they diſlike. Were it not better by Love to *cover a multitude of faults*, and to leave the Judgment of Perſons and things, wherein we are not concerned, unto him who judgeth Righteouſly, and will render unto every Man according to his works? However certain it is, that untill the Evil Fountain of bitter waters be ſtopped, untill we ceaſe to *bleſs God even the Father*, and at the ſame time to *curſe Men made after the Similitude of God*, the wounds that have been given to the Love and Peace of Profeſſors will not be healed.

Thirdly, unto the ſame End are all Men forbidden to think that they have a *Dominion* over the Faith of others, or that the ordering and diſpoſal of it is committed unto them. It is Chriſt alone who is the *Lord of the Conſciences* of his Diſciples. And therefore the beſt and greateſt of the Sons of Men, who have been appointed by him to deal with others in his Name, have conſtantly diſclaimed all thoughts of Power or Rule, over the Conſciences or Faith of the meaneſt of his Subjects. How many ways this may be done, we are filled with *Experiences*; for no way whereby it may be ſo, hath been left unattempted. And the Evil of it hath invaded both

2 *Cor.* 1. 24. 1 *Pet.* 5. 3.

both *Churches* and *Particular Perſons*: Some whereof who have been active in caſting of the *Dominion* of others, ſeem to have deſigned a Poſſeſſion of it in themſelves. And it is well, if where one *Pope* is rejected, many do not riſe in his Place, who want nothing but his Power and Intereſt, to do his work. The Indignation of ſome, that others *do not in all things comply* with their Sentiments, and ſubject themſelves unto their Apprehenſions and Dictates, ariſeth from this Preſumption: And the *Perſecutions* wherein others ingage, do all grow out of the ſame bitter Root. For men can no otherwiſe ſatisfie their Conſciences herein, but by a ſuppoſition that they are warranted to *give meaſures* unto the Minds and Practices of others, that is, their Faith and Conſciences, in Sacred things. And whilſt this *Preſumptious Suppoſition* under any Pretence or colour poſſeſſeth the Minds of Men, it will variouſly act its ſelf unto the Deſtruction of that *Goſpel* Unity, which it is our Duty to preſerve. For when they are perſwaded that others ought to give up themſelves abſolutely to their Guidance in the things of Religion, either becauſe of their *Office* and Dignity, or becauſe they are *Wiſer* than they, or it may be are only able to *diſpute* more then they, if they do not immediately ſo do, eſpecially ſeeing they cannot but judg themſelves in the Right in all things, they are ready to charge their Refuſal on all the *Corrupt Affections*, Principles and Practices, which they can ſur-

mize,

mize, or, their ſuppoſed juſt indignation ſuggeſt unto them. That they are *proud, ignorant,* ſelf-conceited, wilful, factious, is immediately concluded; and a ſemblance unto ſuch Charges ſhall be diligently ſought out, and improved. Nothing but a deceiving Apprehenſion that they are ſome way or other meet to have a *Dominion* over the Faith of their Brethren and Fellow-Servants, would prevail with men, otherwiſe Sober and Learned, ſo to deal with all that diſſent from them, as they are pleaſed to do.

Fourthly, All theſe Evils mentioned are much increaſed in the minds of men, when they are *puffed up* with a conceit of their *own Knowledge* and Wiſdom: This therefore *we are warned to avoid,* that the Edification of the Church may be promoted, and Love preſerved: For hence are very many apt to take *falſe meaſures* of things, eſpecially of themſelves, and thereon to caſt themſelves into many miſchievous Miſtakes. And this is apt to befal them, who for ends beſt known unto themſelves, have with any ordinary diligence attended to the ſtudy of Learning. For upon a ſuppoſal of ſome competent furniture with *Natural Abilities,* they cannot but attain ſome skill and knowledge that the common ſort of unſtudied perſons are unacquainted withal. Oftimes indeed, their *Pre-eminence* in this kind, conſiſts in matters of very ſmall conſequence or importance. But whatever it be, it is

Rom. 12 3. 1 *Cor.* 8. 1.

2 *Cor.* 10 12.

ready to make them think ſtrange of the A-
1 Cor. 3. 18. poſtles advice, *If any man ſeemeth to be wiſe in this world, let him become a Fool, that he may be wiſe*; apt it is to *puffe them up*, to influence their minds with a good conceit of themſelves, and a contempt of others. Hence may we ſee ſome, when they have gotten a little skill in *Languages*, and through cuſtome advantaged by the reading of ſome Books, are able readily to expreſs ſome thoughts, perhaps not *originally* their own, preſently conceit themſelves to be ſo much wiſer than the multitude of unlettered perſons, that they are altogether impatient, that in any thing they ſhould diſſent from them: And this is a common frame with them whoſe *Learning* and *Wit* being their All, do yet reach but *half way* towards the uſeful ends of ſuch things. Others alſo there are, and of them, not a few, who having been in the ways wherein the Skill and Knowledge mentioned are uſually attained, yet through their *Incapacity* or Negligence, or ſome depraved Habit of Mind, or courſe of Life, have not really at all improved in them. And yet theſe alſo, having once attained the countenance of *Eccleſiaſtical Offices* or Preferments, are as forward as any, to declaim againſt, and pretend a contempt of that Ignorance in others, which they are not ſo ſtupid as not to know that the guilt of it may be reflected on themſelves. However theſe things, at beſt, and in their higheſt improvement,

ment, are far enough from *ſolid Wiſdom*; eſpecially that which is from above, and which alone will promote the Peace and Edification of the Church. Some have no advantage by them, but that they can declare and ſpeak out their own weakneſs; others that they can *rail*, and *lie*, and *falſly accuſe*, in Words and Language wherewith they hope to pleaſe the vileſt of men. And certain it is, that *Science*, which whatever it be without the Grace of God, *is but falſly ſo called*, and oftentimes falſly pretended unto, for this evil end of it alone is apt to lift up the minds of men above others, who perhaps come not behind them in any uſeful underſtanding. Yea, ſuppoſe men to have really attained a *ſingular degree* in uſeful knowledge and wiſdom, and that either in things ſpiritual and divine, or in Learning and Sciences, or in Political p udence; yet Experience ſhews us, that an hurtful elation of mind is apt to ariſe from them, if the Souls of men be not well ballanced with Humility, and this evil particularly watched againſt. Hence ariſeth that Impatience of *Contradiction*, that Jealouſie and tenderneſs of mens own Names and Reputations, thoſe ſharp revenges they are ready to take of any ſuppoſed Inroads upon them, or diſreſpects towards them, that contempt & undervaluation of other mens Judgments, thoſe *Magiſterial Impoſitions* and cenſures which proceed from men under a Reputation of theſe Endowments. The Cautions

given us in the Scripture againſt this frame of Spirit, the Examples that are propoſed unto us to the contrary, even that of *Chriſt himſelf*, the Commands that are multiplied for Lowlineſs of mind, Jealouſie over our ſelves, the Soveraignty of God in chuſing whom he pleaſeth to reveal his Mind and Truth unto and by, may in the conſideration of them be uſeful to prevent ſuch Surprizals with *Pride*, Self-conceit, and contempt of others, as ſuppoſed or abuſed knowledge are apt to caſt men into, whereby Diviſions are greatly fomented and increaſed among us. But it may be theſe things will not much prevail with them, who pretending a Zeal and Principle above others in Preaching, and urging the *Examples of Chriſt*, do in moſt of their ways and actings, and in ſome of their Writings, give us an unparallel'd Repreſentation of the Devil.

Laſtly, It is confeſſed by all, that *Falſe Teachers*, Seducers, Broachers of Novel Corrupt and *Heretical* Doctrines, have cauſed many Breaches and Diviſions among ſuch as once agreed in the *Profeſſion* of the ſame Truths and Points of Faith: By means of ſuch perſons, whether within the preſent *Church-State*, or without, there is ſcarce *any Sacred Truth*, which had formerly ſecured its ſtation and poſſeſſion in the minds of the generality of Chriſtians in this Nation, but what hath been ſolicited, or oppoſed. Some make their Errors the principal Foundation

dation, Rule and Meaſure in Communion: Whoever complies with them therein, is *of them*; and whoſo doth not, they avoid; ſo at once they ſhut up themſelves from having any thing to do with them that *love Truth* and *Peace*. And where theſe conſequents do not enſue, mens Zeal for their Errors being overballanced by their love of, and concern in their ſecular intereſt, and their minds influenced by the novel prevailing Opinion of a *great Indifferency* in all things appertaining unto Outward Worſhip; yet the advancing and fomenting of Opinions contrary unto that *Sound Doctrine* which hath been generally owned and taught by the Learned and Godly Paſtors, and received by the People themſelves, cannot but occaſion Strife, Contentions, and Diviſions among Profeſſors. And it may be, there are very few of thoſe *Articles* or Heads of Religion, which in the beginning of the Reformation, and a long time after, were looked on as the moſt *uſeful*, important and neceſſary parts of our Profeſſion, that have not been among us variouſly oppoſed and corrupted. And in theſe *Differences about Doctrine*, lie the hidden Cauſes of the Animoſities whereby *thoſe about Worſhip* and Diſcipline are mannaged. For thoſe who have the advantage of Law and Power on their ſide in theſe leſſer things, are not ſo *unwiſe* as to deal openly with their Adverſaries about thoſe things, wherein the Reputation of eſtabliſhed and

commonly received Doctrines lie againſt them. But under the pretence and ſhelter of contending for Legal Appointments, not a few do exerciſe an Enmity againſt thoſe who *profeſs the Truth*, which they think it not meet as yet openly to oppoſe.

Such are the *Cauſes*, and ſuch are the *Occaſions* of the Differences and Diviſions in and about Religious Concerns, that are among us; by ſuch means have they been fomented and encreaſed: Heightned they have been by the perſonal faults and miſcarriages of many of all ſorts and parties. And as the reproof of their ſinful failings is in its proper ſeaſon a neceſſary duty; ſo no Reformation or Amendment of perſons will give a full relief, nor free us from the evil of our Diviſions, until the *Principles* and *ways* which occaſion them, be taken out of the way.

CHAP

CHAP. V.

Grounds and Reaſons of Non-Conformity.

HAving briefly declared our Senſe concerning the general *Cauſes* and *Occaſions* of our Differences, and that preſent want of Chriſtian Love which is complained of by many; we ſhall now return to give ſome more particular account concerning our *Inconformity* unto, and Non-compliance with the Obſervances and Conſtitutions of the Church of *England*. It is acknowledged, that we do in ſundry things diſſent from them; that we do not, that we cannot come up unto a *Joint Practice* with others in them. It is alſo confeſſed, that hereon there doth enſue an appearance of *Schiſme* between them and us, according as the common notion of it is received in the world. And becauſe in this diſtance and difference, the *Diſſent* unto Compliance is on our parts; there is a ſemblance of a voluntary relinquiſhment of your Communion. And this we know expoſeth us, in *Vulgar Judgments* and Apprehenſions, unto the Charge of *Schiſme*, and neceſſitateth us unto ſelf-defence; as though the only matter in queſtion were, whether we are guilty of this evil or no. For that advantage have all Churches which have had an op-

portunity to *fix terms of Communion*, right or wrong, juſt or unequal; the Differences which enſue thereon, they will try out on no other terms, but only whether thoſe that diſſent from them, are *Schiſmaticks* or not. Thus they make themſelves *Actors* oft-times in this Cauſe, who ought in the firſt place to be charged with *Injury*; and a Trial is made meerly at the hazard of the Reputation of thoſe, who are cauſeleſly put upon their Purgation and Defence. Yea with many, a kind of *Poſſeſſion* and *Multitude*, do render Diſſenters unqueſtionably *Schiſmatical*; ſo that it is eſteemed an unreaſonable Confidence in them, to deny themſelves ſo to be. So deals the Church of *Rome* with thoſe that are Reformed. An *open Schiſme* there is between them; and if they cannot ſufficiently fix the Guilt of it on the *Reformed*, by confidence and clamours, with the advantage of Prepoſſeſſion; yet, as if they they were perfectly innocent themſelves, they will allow of no other Enquiry in this Matter, but what conſiſts in calling the *Truth* and *Reputation* of the other Party, into queſtion. It being our preſent condition to lie under this Charge from many, whoſe Intereſt it is to have us thought guilty thereof, we do deny that there is any *culpable ſeceſſion made by us*, from the Communion of any that profeſs the Goſpel in theſe Nations, or that the blame of the *appearing Schiſme* that is among us, can duly or juſtly be reflected on us; which

which in the Remainder of our Diſcourſe, we ſhall make to appear.

What are our Thoughts and Judgments, concerning the *Church-ſtate* and *Intereſt* of the Profeſſors of the Goſpel in this Nation, we have before declared. And we hope they are ſuch, that in the Judgment of perſons ſober and impartial, we ſhall be relieved from thoſe clamorous Accuſations, which are without number or meaſure, by ſome caſt upon us. Our Prayers are alſo continually unto the *God of Love and Peace* for the taking away of all Diviſions and their Cauſes from among us. Nor is the ſatisfaction which ariſeth from our *ſincerity* herein, in the leaſt taken off, or rent from us, by the uncharitable Endeavours of ſome, to rake up pretences to the contrary. And ſhould thoſe, in whoſe *power* it is, think meet to imitate the *Paſtors and Guides* of the Churches of old, and to follow them in any of the wayes which they uſed for the Reſtauration of *Unity* and Agreement unto Chriſtians, when loſt or endangered, we ſhould not decline the contribution of any aſſiſtance, by Counſel or Fraternal Compliance, which God ſhould be pleaſed to ſupply us withal. But whilſt ſome whoſe advantages render them conſiderable in theſe matters, ſeem to entertain no other Thoughts concerning us, but what iſſue in *Violence* and Oppreſſion, the principal duty incumbent on us is, quietly to approve our Conſciences unto God,

that

that in *ſincerity of heart* we deſire in all things to pleaſe him, and to conform our Lives, Principles and Practiſes to his Will, ſo far as he is graciouſly pleaſed to make it known unto us. And as for men, we hope ſo to diſcharge the Duty required of us, as that none may juſtly charge us with any Diſorders, *Unpeaceableneſs*, or other evils: For we do not apprehend that we are either the cauſe or culpable occaſion of thoſe Inconveniences and Troubles which ſome have *put themſelves unto* by their endeavours for our diſturbance, impoveriſhing and ruine. Let none imagine, but that we have conſidered the Evils, and evil Conſequents of the *Schiſmes* and *Diviſions* that are among us; and thoſe who do ſo, do it upon the forfeiture of their Charity. We know how much the great work of *Preaching the Goſpel* unto the Converſion of the Souls of men is impeded thereby; as alſo what prejudice ariſeth thence againſt the Truth, wherein we are all agreed; with what Temptations, and mutual exaſperations, to the loſs of Love, and the occaſioning of many ſinful Miſcarriages in perſons of all ſorts, do hereon enſue: But we deny that it is in *our power* to remove them, or take them out of the way, nor are we conſcious unto our ſelves of any *Sin* or *Evil*, in what we do, or in what we do not do, by our not doing of it in the Worſhip of God. It is *Duty alone* unto Jeſus Chriſt, whereunto in theſe things we attend, and wherein

wherein we ought ſo to do. And where Matters of this nature are ſo circumſtanced, as that *Duty* will contribute nothing towards Unity, we are at a loſs for any progreſs towards it. The Sum of what is objected unto us, (as hath been obſerved) is our *Non-Conformity*, or our forbearance of actual perſonal Communion with the preſent Church-Conſtitutions, in the Modes, Rites, and Ceremonies of its Worſhip: Hence the *Schiſme* complained of, doth enſue. Unleſs this Communion be *total*, conſtant, without endeavour of any Alteration or Reformation, we cannot in the judgment of ſome, be freed from the guilt hereof. This we deny, and are perſwaded that it is to be charged elſewhere: For,

Firſt, All the Conditions of abſolute and compleat Communion with the *Church of England*, which are propoſed unto us, and indiſpenſibly required of us, eſpecially as we are Miniſters, are *Unſcriptural*; ſuch as the Word of God doth neither warrant, mention, nor intimate, eſpecially not under any ſuch conſideration, as *neceſſary Conditions* of Communion in or among the Churches of Chriſt. We diſpute not now about the *Lawfulneſs* or *Unlawfulneſs* of things in themſelves; nor whether they may be obſerved or no, by ſuch as have no conviction of any Sin or Evil in them. Neither do we judge or cenſure them, by whom they are obſerved: Our Enquiry is ſolely about our own

own Liberty and Duty. And what concerneth them, is reſolved into this *one Queſtion*, as to the Argument in hand: *Whether ſuch Things or Obſervances in the Worſhip of God, as are wholly unſcriptural, may be ſo made the indiſpenſible Condition of Communion with any particular Church, as that they by whom they are ſo made and impoſed on others, ſhould be juſtified in their ſo doing; and that if any Differences, Diviſions or Schiſmes, do enſue thereon, the guilt and blame of them muſt neceſſarily fall on thoſe who refuſe ſubmiſſion to them, or to admit of them as ſuch?* That the Conditions propoſed unto us, and impoſed on us indiſpenſibly, if we intend to enjoy the Communion of this Church, are of this nature, we ſhall afterwards prove by an induction of Inſtances. Nor is it of any concernment in this matter, what place the things enquired after do hold, or are ſuppoſed to hold in the Worſhip of God; our preſent Enquiry is about their warranty to be made *conditions* of *Church-Communion*. Now we are perſwaded that the Lord Chriſt hath ſet his Diſciples at liberty from accepting of ſuch terms of Communion from any Churches in the world: And on the ſame Grounds we deny, that he hath given or granted unto them Authority, to conſtitute ſuch Terms and Conditions of their Communion, and indiſpenſibly to impoſe them upon all that enjoy it, according to their ſeveral capacities and concerns therein: For,

Firſt,

First, The *Rule of Communion* among the Diſciples of Chriſt in all his Churches, is invariably eſtabliſhed and fixed by himſelf. His Commiſſion, Direction and Command, given out unto the firſt Planters and Founders of them, containing an obliging Rule unto all that ſhould ſucceed them throughout all Generations, hath ſo eſtabliſhed the Bounds, Limits and Conditions of Church-Communion, as that it is not lawful for any to attempt their Removal or Alteration. *Go ye*, ſaith he to them, *and teach all Nations, Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt; teaching them to obſerve all things whatever I have commanded you, and lo I am with you alwayes, even unto the end of the world.* All the Benefits and Bleſſings, all the Comfort and uſe of Church-Aſſemblies and Communion, depends alone on the promiſe of the *Preſence of Chriſt* with them. Thence doth all the Authority that may be exerciſed in them proceed; and thence doth the efficacy of what they do unto the edification of the Souls of men, ariſe and flow. Now that any one may thus enjoy the *Preſence of Chriſt* in any Church, with the Fruits and Benefits of it, no more can be required of him, but that through the Preaching of the Goſpel, and Baptiſm, being made a profeſſed Diſciple, he do, or be ready to do and obſerve all whatſoever Chriſt hath commanded. This hath he eſtabliſhed as the *Rule of Communion* among

Mat. 28. 19, 20.

his

his Diſciples and Churches in all Generations: In all other things which do relate unto the Worſhip of God, he hath ſet them, and
Gal.6.1. left them at liberty, which ſo far as it is a *Grant* and *Priviledge* purchaſed for them, they are obliged to make good and maintain. We know it will be here replied, that among the Commands of Chriſt, it is, that we ſhould *hear the Church*, and *obey the Guides and Rulers thereof*: Whatever therefore is appointed by them, we are to ſubmit unto, and obſerve, even by virtue of the Command of Chriſt. And indeed it is certainly true, that it is the Will and Command of the Lord Jeſus, that we ſhould both hear the Church, and obey the Guides of it: But by virtue of this Rule, neither the Church nor its Guides can make any thing neceſſary to the Diſciples of Chriſt, as a condition of Communion with them, but only what he hath commanded. For the Rule here laid down is given unto thoſe *Guides or Rulers*, who are thereby bound up, in the Appointments of what the Diſciples are to obſerve, unto the Commands of Chriſt. And were a Command included herein, of obeying the Commands or Appointments of Church-Guides, and the promiſe of the *Preſence of Chriſt* annexed thereunto; as he had given them all his own Power, and placed them in his Throne, ſo we had been all obliged to follow them whither ever they had carried or led us, although it were to *Hell it ſelf*,

as ſome of the *Canoniſts*; on this Principle, have ſpoken concerning the *Pope*. Here therefore is a Rule of Communion fixed, both unto them that are to rule in the Church, and them that are to obey. And whereas, perhaps it may be ſaid, that if the Rulers of the Church may *appoint nothing* in and unto the Communion of the Church, but what Chriſt hath himſelf commanded, then indeed is their Authority little worth, yea, upon the matter none at all: For the Commands of Chriſt are ſufficiently confirmed and fixed by his own Authority; and to what end then ſerves that of the Rulers of the Church? We muſt ſay, that their *whole Authority* is limited in the Text, unto *Teaching of men to obſerve what Chriſt hath commanded*. And this they are to do with Authority; but under him, and in his Name; and according to the Rules that he hath given them. And thoſe who think not this Power ſufficient for them, muſt ſeek it elſewhere; for the Lord Chriſt will allow no more in his Churches.

To make this yet more evident, we may conſider that particular *Inſtance*, wherein the Primitive Chriſtians had a Trial, in the Caſe as now ſtated before us: And this was in the Matter of *Moſaical Ceremonies and Inſtitutions*, which ſome would have impoſed on them, as a condition of their Communion in the Profeſſion of the Goſpel: In the determination hereof, was their Liberty aſſert-

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ed by the Apoſtles, and their Duty declared to abide therein. And this was the moſt ſpecious Pretence of impoſing on the *Liberty of Chriſtians*, that ever they were exerciſed withal. For the Obſervation of theſe things had countenance given unto it, from their *Divine Original*, and the condeſcending Practice of the Apoſtles for a good ſeaſon. That other Inſtances of the like nature ſhould be condemned in the Scripture is impoſſible, ſeeing none had then endeavoured the Introduction of any of that Nature. But a *general Rule* may be eſtabliſhed in the determination of one Caſe, as well as in that of many; provided it be not extended beyond what is eminently included in that caſe. Herein therefore was there a Direction given for the Duty and Practiſe of Churches in following Ages; and that in purſuit of the Law and Conſtitution of the Lord Chriſt before-mentioned. Neither is there any force in the Exception, that theſe things were impoſed under a pretence of being *commanded by God* himſelf: For they ſay, to require any thing under that Notion, which indeed he hath not commanded, is an *Adding* to his Command, which ought not to be admitted: But to require things *Indifferent*, without that pretence, may be allowed. But as in the former way, men adde unto the Commands of God *Formally*, ſo in this latter, they do it *Materially*, which alſo is prohibited: For in his Worſhip, we

are

are forbidden to adde to the things that he hath appointed, no leſs than to pretend commands from him which he hath not given. He therefore who profeſſeth and pleadeth his willingneſs to *obſerve and do* in Church-communion, whatever Chriſt hath inſtituted and commanded, cannot regularly be refuſed the Communion of any Church, under any pretence of his refuſal to do other things, which confeſſedly are not ſo required.

It is pleaded indeed, that no other things, as to the *Subſtance* of the Worſhip of God, can or ought to be appointed, beſides what is inſtituted by Jeſus Chriſt: But as to the *Manner* or *Modes* of the Performance of what he doth command, with other *Rites* and *Ceremonies* to be obſerved for *Order* and *Decency*, they may lawfully be inſtituted by by the Rulers of the Church. Let it therefore at preſent be granted, that ſo they may be by them who are perſwaded of the Lawfulneſs of thoſe *Modes*, and of the things wherein they conſiſt; ſeeing that is not the queſtion at preſent under agitation. Neither will this Conceſſion help us in our preſent Enquiry, unleſs it be alſo granted, that whatever may be *lawfully practiſed* in the worſhip of God, may be lawfully made a *neceſſary Condition* of Communion in that Worſhip: But this will not be granted, nor can it ever be proved. Beſides, in our preſent Difference, this is only the Judgment of *one Party*, that the things mentioned may be

Lawfully obſerved in and among Sacred Adminiſtrations: And thereon the Concluſion muſt be, that whatever *ſome* think may be lawfully practiſed in Divine Worſhip, may lawfully be made an indiſpenſible condition of Communion unto the *whole*. Nor will it give force unto this Inference, that thoſe who judge them lawful are the *Rulers* and *Guides* of the Church, unto whoſe determination the Judgment of private perſons is not to be oppoſed: For we have ſhewed before, that a Judgment concerning what any one is to do or practiſe in the worſhip of God, belongs unto *every man* who is to do or practiſe ought therein; and he who makes it not, is brutiſh. And the Judgment which the Rulers of the Church are to make for the whole, or to go before it, is, in what is commanded, or not ſo, by Jeſus Chriſt, not in what is fit to be added thereunto by themſelves. Beſides if it muſt be allowed that ſuch things may be made the *conditions* of *Church-Communion*, then any who are in place of Authority, may multiply ſuch conditions according unto the utmoſt extent of their Judgments, until they become burdenſome and intolerable unto all, or really ridiculous in themſelves, as it is fallen out in the *Church* of *Rome*: But this would prove expreſly deſtructive unto that certain and *unvariable Rule of Church-communion*, which the Lord Chriſt hath fixed and eſtabliſhed; whereof we ſhall ſpeak again afterward.

Neither

Neither will that Plea, which is by ſome inſiſted on in this caſe, yield any ſolid or univerſal relief. It is ſaid, that *ſome may warrantably and duly obſerve in the Worſhip of God*, what is *unduly and unwarrantably* impoſed on them by others. And indeed all Controverſies about Church-Conſtitution, Diſcipline, and external Worſhip, are by *ſome* reduced unto theſe two Heads; that the *Magiſtrate* may appoint what he pleaſeth, and the *People* may obſerve whatever he appoints: For as there is no Government of the Church determined in the Scripture, it is meet it ſhould be erected and diſpoſed by the ſupreme *Magiſtrate*, who, no doubt, upon that ſuppoſition, is only fit and qualified ſo to do: And for *outward worſhip*, and the Rites thereof, both it and they are ſo far *indifferent*, as that we may comply with whatever is impoſed on us; whether they be good, or uſeful, or evil, lies at the doors of others to anſwer about. But this ſeems to riſe up in expreſs *contradiction* unto thoſe Commands which are given us, to *ſtand faſt in the Liberty wherewith Chriſt hath made us free*; and in theſe things, not *to be ſervants of men*. For what do we do leſs, than renounce the Priviledge of our Liberty purchaſed for us at an high rate and Price, or what are we leſs than *Servants of Men*, whilſt we bring our ſelves in bondage unto the obſervation of ſuch things in the worſhip of God, as we judge neither commanded

by him, nor tending unto our own Edification, but meerly becauſe by them ordained? Moreover, ſuppoſe it be the Judgment of ſome, as it is of many, that the things mentioned, though in their own nature indifferent, do become *unlawful* unto them to obſerve when impoſed as neceſſary conditions of all Church-Communion, contrary to the command and appointment of Chriſt? We know this is exceedingly *declaimed againſt* as that which is perverſe and froward. For what, ſay many, can be more unreaſonable, than that things in *their own nature indifferent* ſhould become *unlawful* becauſe they are commanded? But it is at leaſt no leſs unreaſonable, that things *confeſſedly indifferent* ſhould not be left ſo, but be rendred neceſſary unto practiſe, though uſeleſs in it, by arbitrary commands. But the opinion traduced, is alſo much miſtaken. For although it be granted that the things themſelves are *indifferent* in their own nature, not capable, but as determined by circumſtances, of either moral good or evil; yet it is not granted that the obſervation of them, even as *uncommanded*, is indifferent in the Worſhip of God. And although the command doth not alter the Nature, and make that which was indifferent become *evil*, yet that command of its ſelf, being contrary to many divine commands and inſtructions given us in the Scripture, a complyance with the things commanded therein may become unlawful to us. And what ſhall they do whoſe judgment this is? ſhall they admit of them

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as *lawful*, upon the conſideration of that change about them, which renders them *unlawful*? This they will not eaſily be induced to give their aſſent unto.

Let therefore the Rule of Church Communion be obſerved which our Lord Jeſus Chriſt hath fixed; and no ſmall occaſion of our ſtrifes and diviſions will be removed out of the way. But whilſt there is this conteſt among us, If one pleads his readineſs *to do and obſerve whatever the Lord Chriſt hath commanded*, and cannot be convinced of inſincerity in his profeſſion, or of want of underſtanding in any known Inſtitution of his, and thereon requires the Communion of any Church; but others ſay nay, you ſhall obſerve and do ſundry other things that *we our ſelves have appoynted*, or you ſhall have no communion with us: as it cannot be but that Diviſions and *Schiſms* will enſue thereon; ſo it will not be difficult for an indifferent by-ſtander, to judge on whether ſide the occaſion and guilt of them doth remain.

Secondly, We have the *Practiſe* of the Apoſtles in the purſuance of the Direction and Command of their Lord and ours, for our Guide in this Caſe. And it may be well and ſafely thought, that this ſhould give a certain Rule unto the proceedings and actings of all Church-Guides in future Ages. Now they did never make any thing *unſcriptural*, or what they had not received by *divine Revelation*, to be a condition of Communion in Religious Worſhip & Church Order among Chriſtians.

Act. 6. 4. For as they teſtified of themſelves, that *they would continually give themſelves unto prayer, and the Miniſtry of the word*; ſo it was of old obſerved concerning them, that their conſtant labour was for the good of the ſouls of men in their converſion unto God, and edification in faith and holineſs; but as for the *Inſtitution of Feſtivals* or *Faſts*, of *Rites* or *Ceremonies* to be obſerved in the Worſhip of the Churches, they intermedled with no ſuch things. And thence it came to paſs, that in the firſt entrance and admiſſion of *Obſervances* about ſuch things, there was a great and endleſs variety in them, both as to the things themſelves obſerved, and as to the manner of their obſervation. And this was gradually increaſed unto ſuch an height and exceſs, as that the *burden* of them became intolerable unto Chriſtendome. Nor indeed could any better ſucceſs be expected in a relinquiſhment and departure from the Pattern of Church Order, given us in their example and practiſe. Neither is the Plea from hence built meerly on this conſideration, that no man alive, either from their Writings, or the approved Records of thoſe Times, can manifeſt that they ever preſcribed unto the Churches, or impoſed on them the obſervance of any *uninſtituted Rite*, to be obſerved as a meaſure and Rule of their Communion; but alſo it ſo fell out in the good providence of God, that the *Caſe* under debate, was propoſed unto them, and joyntly determined by them. For being called unto advice and counſel, in the caſe of the

Socrat. Hiſt. lib. 5.

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difference that was between the *Jewiſh* and *Gentile* Converts, and Profeſſors, wherein the former laboured to impoſe on the latter the obſervation of *Moſes Inſtitutions*, as the condition of their joynt Communion, as was mentioned even now, they not only determine againſt any ſuch *Impoſition*, but alſo expreſly declare that nothing but neceſſary things (that is, ſuch as are ſo from other Reaſons antecedently unto their Preſcriptions and Appointments) ought to be required of any Chriſtians, in the Communion or Worſhip of the Church. And as they neither did nor would on that great occaſion, in that *Solemn Aſſembly*, appoynt any *one thing* to be obſerved by the Diſciples and Churches which the Lord Chriſt had not commanded; ſo in their Direction given unto the *Gentile* Believers for a temporary abſtinence from the uſe of their Liberty in one or two Inſtances whereunto it did extend, they plainly *intimate*, that it was the avoydance of a *preſent Scandal*, which might have greatly retarded the progreſs of the Goſpel, that was the reaſon of that Direction. And in ſuch Caſes it is granted, that we may in many things for a ſeaſon forgo the uſe of our Liberty. This was their way and Practiſe, this the *Example* which they left unto all that ſhould follow them in the Rule and Guidance of the Church. Whence it is come to paſs in After-Ages, that men ſhould think themſelves *wiſer* than they, or more careful to provide for the peace and unity of the Church, we know not. But let the bounds and meaſures

Acts 15.

ſures of Church Communion fixed in and by their *Example*, ſtand unmoved, and many cauſes of our *preſent Diviſions* will be taken away. But it may be it will be offered, that the *Preſent ſtate of things* in the World, requires ſome alteration in, or variation from the preciſe *Example* of the Apoſtles in this matter. The due obſervation of the Inſtitutions of Chriſt in ſuch manner as the nature of of them required, was then ſufficient unto the Peace and Unity of the Churches. But *Primitive Simplicity* is now decayed amongſt the moſt; ſo that a multiplication of Rules and Obſervances is needful for the ſame ends. But we have ſhewed before, that the *Accommodation* of Church Rule and Communion to the *Degeneracy of Chriſtians* or Churches, or their Secular Engagements, is no way advantagious unto Religion. Let them whoſe Duty it is, endeavour to reduce Profeſſors and Profeſſion to the *Primitive Standard* of Light, Humility, and Holineſs, and they may be ordered in all Church concerns, according to the *Apoſtolical* Pattern. Wherefore when Chriſtians unto the former Plea of their readineſs to *obſerve, and do*, whatſoever Chriſt hath commanded them, do alſo adde their willingneſs to comply with whatever the *Apoſtles* of Chriſt have either by *Precept*, or *Example* in their own practiſe, commended unto them, or did do or require in the firſt Churches, and cannot be convinced of failing to make good their Profeſſion; we do not know whence any can derive a Warranty

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enabling them to impoſe any other *conditions of communion* on them. The *Inſtitution* therefore of the Lord Chriſt, and the *Practiſe* of the Apoſtles, lye directly againſt the impoſing of the conditions enquired about. And firſt to *invent* them, then to *impoſe* them, making them neceſſary to be obſerved, and then to judg and cenſure them as *Schiſmaticks*, as enemies to Love and Peace, who do not ſubmit unto them, looks not unlike the exerciſe of an unwarrantable *Dominion* over the Faith and Conſciences of the Diſciples of Chriſt.

Thirdly, not only by their Example and Practice, but they have alſo *Doctrinally* declared, what is the Duty of Churches, and what is the Liberty of Chriſtians in this matter. The Apoſtle *Paul* diſcourſeth at large hereon; *Rom.* 14. 15. *Chap.* The attentive Reading of thoſe *two Chapters*, is ſufficient to determine this Cauſe among all unintereſted and unprejudiced Perſons. He ſuppoſeth in them, and it is the Caſe which he exemplifies in ſundry Inſtances, that there were among Chriſtians and Churches at that time, different *Apprehenſions* and *Obſervances* about ſome things appertaining unto the worſhip of God: And theſe things were ſuch, as had ſome ſeeming Countenance of a Sacred and *Divine Authority*, for ſuch was their Original Inſtitution. Some in the conſideration hereof, judged that they were ſtill to be obſerved; and their *Conſciences* had been long exerciſed in an holy ſubjection unto the Authority of God in the Obſervance of them. Nor

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was there *yet* any expreſs and Poſitive Law erected for their Abrogation; but the ceaſing of any Obligation unto their Obſervance from their *Primitive Inſtitution*, was to be gathered from the nature of Gods *Oeconomy* towards his Church. Many therefore continued to obſerve them, eſteeming it their Duty ſo to do. Others were perſwaded and ſatisfied that they were freed from any Obligation unto the owning and obſervance of them. And whereas this *Liberty* was given them by Jeſus Chriſt in the Goſpel, they were reſolved to make uſe of it, and not to comply with the other ſort, who preſſed *Conformity* upon them in their Ceremonies and Modes of Divine worſhip. So it may fall out in other Inſtances. Some may be perſwaded, that ſuch or ſuch things may be *Lawful* for them to obſerve in the worſhip of God; they may be ſo unto them, and, as is ſuppoſed, in their own Nature. On the Conſideration of ſome Circumſtances they may judg that it is *convenient* or expedient to attend unto their Obſervance; Laſtly, all *Coincidencies* weighed, that it is *neceſſary* that ſo they ſhould do; and that others alſo that walk with them in the Profeſſion of the Goſpel ſhould conform themſelves unto their Order and Practice. On the other hand ſome there are, who becauſe the things of the joynt-practice required, are not *appointed by Jeſus Chriſt*, nor doth it appear unto them, that he hath given Power unto any others to appoint

point them, do not judg it *expedient*, nor yet, all Circumſtances conſidered, *Lawful* to obſerve them. Now whereas this *Caſe* anſwers unto that before propoſed, the Determination thereof given by the Apoſtle, may ſafely be applyed unto this alſo. What Rule therefore doth he give therein, which he would have attended unto, as the means for the Preſervation of Love, Peace, and Unity among them? Is it that the former ſort of Perſons, provided they be the moſt, or have the moſt Power, ought to impoſe the Practice of thoſe things which they eſteem *Lawful* and *Convenient*, on thoſe who *judg them not ſo*; when it is out of Queſtion, that they are not appointed by Chriſt; only it is pretended that they are not forbidden by him? Where indeed the *Queſtion* was about the Inſtitutions of Chriſt, he binds up the Churches preciſely unto what *he had received* from him. But in caſes of this nature, wherein a direct command of Chriſt cannot be pleaded nor is pretended, he abſolutely rejects and condemns all thoughts of ſuch a procedure. But ſuppoſing, that Differences in Judgment and Practice were and would be among Chriſtians, the Sum of his Advice is, that all Offences and *Scandals* ought to be diligently avoided; that *cenſuring*, *judging*, and deſpiſings on the account of ſuch Differences, be caſt out; that *tenderneſs* be uſed towards them that are weak, and nothing ſeverely preſt on them that *Doubt*; and for their different Apprehenſions

1 *Cor.* 11. 23.

henſions and Ways, they ſhould all walk in Peace, condeſcending unto, and bearing with one another. Nothing can more evidently determine the *unlawfulneſs* of impoſing on Chriſtians unſcriptural Conditions of Communion, than do the Diſcourſes of that Great Apoſtle to this Purpoſe. Yea better it is, and more agreeable unto the mind of Chriſt, that Perſons and particular Churches, ſhould be left unto different Obſervations in ſundry things relating unto Sacred worſhip, wherein they cannot joyn with each other, nor communicate together, endeavouring in the mean time to *keep the Unity of the ſpirit in the bond of Peace*; than that they ſhould be inforced unto an *Uniformity* in the Practice of things that have not the immediate Authority of Chriſt enſtamped on them. Accordingly it ſo fell out among them unto whom the Apoſtle gave theſe Directions, and that ſuitably unto his Intention in them. For the *Diſſenting Parties*, agreeing in the common Faith and Profeſſion of the Goſpel, did yet conſtantly meet in *diſtinct Aſſemblies or Churches*, for the Celebration of Holy worſhip, becauſe of the different Rites wherein they did not agree. And in this *Poſture* were Peace and Love continued among them, untill in proceſs of Time, their Differences through mutual forbearance being extinguiſhed, they Coaleſced into one Church ſtate and Order: And the former *Peace* which they had in their Diſtances, was deemed ſufficient, whilſt things

were

were not meaſured nor regulated by ſecular Intereſt or Advantages. But it is a part of our preſent unhappineſs, that *ſuch a Peace* among Chriſtians and particular Churches, is miſtaken to have an ill Aſpect upon the concerns of ſome belonging unto the Church in Power, Honour, and Revenue. But as we apprehend there is, as things are now ſtated among us, a plain *miſtake* in this ſurmize, ſo if the *Glory* of God, and the *Honour* of the Goſpel were chief in our Conſultations about Church Affairs, it would be with us of no ſuch conſideration, as to hinder us from committing quietly the ſucceſs and events of duty unto the Providence of God.

Fourthly, There was alſo a ſignal Vindication of the Truth pleaded for, in an *Inſtance of Fact* among the Primitive Churches. There was an opinion which prevailed very early among them, about the neceſſary obſervation of *Eaſter*, in the room of the *Jewiſh Paſſover*; for the ſolemn commemoration of the Death and Reſurrection of our Saviour: And it was taken for granted by moſt of them, that the obſervance hereof was countenanced, if not rendred *neceſſary* unto them, by the example of the Apoſtles: For they generally believed that by them it was obſerved, and that it was their Duty to accommodate themſelves unto their practiſe; only there was a difference about the *preciſe Time* or Day, which they were to ſolemnize, as the Head and Rule of their Feſtival; as

every

every undue preſumption hath one *Lameneſs* or other accompanying it: It is Truth alone which is ſquare and ſteady. Some therefore pleaded the example of *John* the Apoſtle and Evangeliſt, who as it was ſtrongly aſſerted and teſtified by multitudes, kept his *Eaſter* at ſuch a time, and by ſuch a Rule, whom they thought meet to follow and imitate. Others, not inferiour unto them in number or Authority, oppoſed unto their Time the example of *Peter*, whom they affirmed (on what grounds and Reaſons they know beſt, for they are now loſt) to have obſerved his *Eaſter* at another Time, and according unto a different Rule. And it is ſcarcely imaginable how the Conteſts hereabouts troubled the Churches both of *Europe* and *Aſia*; who certainly had things more material to have exerciſed themſelves about. The Church of *Rome* embraced that Opinion, which at length prevailed over the other, and obtained a kind of *Catholiciſme* againſt that which was countenanced only by the Authority of St. *John*; as that Church was alwayes wondrous happy in reducing other Churches unto an acquieſcency in its ſentiments, as ſeldom wanting *deſire* or *skill* dexterouſly to improve its manifold advantages. Now this was that *Eaſter* to be celebrated on the *Lords Day* only, and not by the Rule of the *Jewiſh Paſsover*, on the 14 day of the firſt month, what day of the week ſoever it fell out upon. Hereon *Victor* the *Biſhop* of that Church, being confident that the Truth was on his

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ſide, namely that *Eaſter* was to be obſerved on the *Lords Day*, reſolved to make it a *Condition of Communion* unto all the Churches; for otherwiſe he ſaw not how there could be either Union, Peace, or Uniformity among them. He did not queſtion but that he had a good Foundation to build upon: For that *Eaſter* was to be obſerved by vertue of *Apoſtolical Tradition*, was generally granted by all. And he took it as unqueſtionable upon a current and prevalent *Rumor*, that the obſervation of it was confined to the *Lords day* by the example of St. *Peter*. Hereupon he refuſed the Communion of all that would not conform unto his reſolution for the obſervation of *Eaſter* on the Lords day; and caſt out of Communion all thoſe Perſons and Churches, who would obſerve any other day; which proved to be the condition of the principal Churches of *Aſia*, amongſt whom the Apoſtle *John* did longeſt converſe. Here was our preſent caſe directly exemplified, or repreſented ſo long before hand; the *Succeſs* onely of this fact of his, remaineth to be enquired into. Now it is known unto all what entertainment this his *new Rule of Communion* found among the Churches of Chriſt. The Reproof of his Precipitancy, and irregular fixing *new bounds* unto Church Communion, was famous in thoſe days: Eſpecially the *Rebuke* given unto him, and his practiſe, by one of the moſt Holy and Learned Perſons then

then living, is eminently celebrated, as conſonant to Truth and Peace, by thoſe who have tranſmitted unto us the *Reports* of thoſe Times. He who himſelf firſt condemned others raſhly, was for his ſo doing generally condemned by all. Suppoſe now that any Perſons living at *Rome*, and there called into Communion with the Church, ſhould have had the condition thereof propoſed unto them, namely that they ſhould *aſſent and declare, that the obſervation of Eaſter by Apoſtolical Tradition was to be on the Lords day only*; and upon their refuſal ſo to do, ſhould be excluded from Communion, or on their own accords ſhould refrain from it; where ſhould the Guilt of this Diſorder and *Schiſm* be charged? And thus it fell out, not only with thoſe who came out of *Aſia* to *Rome*, who were not received by that *Diotrephes*; but alſo with ſundry in that Church its ſelf, as *Blaſtus* and others; as what great Diviſions were occaſioned hereby between the *Saxons* and *Brittains*, hath been by many declared. But in the Judgment of the primitive Churches, the Guilt of theſe *Schiſms*, was to be charged on them that coyned and impoſed theſe *new Rules* and *Conditions* of Communion. And had they not been judged by any, the pernicious conſequences of this temerarious Attempt are ſufficient to reflect no inconſiderable Guilt upon it. Neither could the whole *Obſervance* its ſelf, from firſt to laſt, ever compenſate that loſs of Love and Peace among

among Chriſtians, and Churches, which was occaſioned thereby; Nor hath the Introduction of ſuch things ever obtained any better ſucceſs in the Church of God. How free the Churches were untill that time, after they were once delivered from the Attempt of the *Circumciſed Profeſſors* to impoſe upon them the Ceremonies of *Moſes*, from any appearance of unwritten Conditions of Communion, is manifeſt unto all, who have looked into the Monuments which remain of thoſe times. It is very true, that ſundry Chriſtians took upon them very early, the Obſervation of *ſundry Rites* and Uſages in Religion, whereunto they had no Guidance or Direction by the word of God. For as the corrupted Nature of Man, is prone to the Invention and uſe of ſenſible preſent things in Religion, eſpecially where Perſons are not able to find ſatisfaction in thoſe that are *purely ſpiritual*, requiring great intention of mind and Affections in their Exerciſe; ſo were they many of them eaſily infected by that Tincture which remained in them from the *Judaiſme* or *Gentiliſm* from which they were converted. But theſe obſervances were *free*, and taken up by Men of their own *accord*; not only every Church, but every Perſon, in the moſt of them, as far as it appears, being left unto their own Liberty. Some *Ages* it was before ſuch things were turned into Laws and Canons; and that perhaps [illegible] at leaſt

minds and Conſciences cannot be regulated by. The Judgment therefore and Practice of the *firſt Churches* are manifeſt againſt ſuch Impoſitions.

Fifthly, upon a ſuppoſition that it ſhould be Lawful for any Perſons or Churches to aſſign *unſcriptural Conditions* of their Communion, it will follow, that there is no *certain Rule of Communion* amongſt Chriſtians fixed and determined by Chriſt. That this is otherwiſe, we have before declared, and ſhall now only manifeſt the evil Conſequences of ſuch a Suppoſition. For if it be ſo, no Man can claim an *Admiſſion* into the Society or Communion of any Church, or a Participation in the Ordinances of the Goſpel with them, by vertue of the *Authority* of Jeſus Chriſt. For notwithſtanding all his Pleas, of ſubmiſſion to his Inſtitutions, and the *Obſervation of his Commands*, every Church may propoſe ſomething, yea many things unto him, that he hath not appointed, without an admiſſion whereof, and ſubjection thereunto, he may be *juſtly excluded* from all Church Priviledges among them. Now this ſeems not conſonant unto the Authority that Chriſt hath over the Church, nor that Honour which ought to be given unto him therein. Nor on the ſame ſuppoſition are his Laws ſufficient to rule and quiet the *Conſciences*, or to provide for the Edification of his Diſciples. Now if *Diotrephes* is blamed, for not receiving the *Brethren*, 3 *Joh.* 9, 10. who were *recommended* unto the Church by the

the Apoſtle, probably becauſe they would not ſubmit to that *pre-eminence* which he had obtained among them; they will ſcarcely eſcape without reproof, who refuſe thoſe whom the Lord Chriſt commends unto them by the *Rules of the Goſpel*, becauſe they will not ſubmit unto ſuch new Impoſitions as by vertue of their *Pre-eminence* they would put upon them. And what endleſs Perplexities they muſt be caſt into, who have learned in theſe things to call him *only Lord and Maſter*, is apparent unto all. Baptiſm, with a voluntary credible *Profeſſion* of Faith, Repentance and Obedience unto the Lord Chriſt in his Commands and Inſtitutions, is all the warranty which he hath given unto any of his Diſciples, to claim their Admiſſion into his Churches, which are inſtituted and appointed to receive them, and to build them up in their Faith. And if any Perſon who produceth this *warranty*, and thereon deſireth, according to order, the Communion of any Church; if he may be excluded from it, or forbidden an entrance into it, unleſs it be on grounds ſufficient in the Judgment of Charity to evince the falſeneſs and hypocriſie of his Profeſſion, little regard is had to the Authority of Chriſt, and too much unto Mens own. Churches indeed may more or leſs inſiſt upon the Explicitneſs of this *Profeſſion*, and the Evidences of its ſincerity, as they find it tend to their Peace and Edification, with a due Attendance unto the *Rule* and *Example* left unto them in

this matter, in the Goſpel. And that the exerciſe of this Power in any Churches may not turn to the *Prejudice* of any, every Profeſſor is allowed, with reference unto particular Aſſemblies, to make his choice of the *Meaſure* he will comply withal; at leaſt if he will make the choice of his habitation ſubſervient unto his Edification. Hereby the Peace and Duty, both of Churches and private Perſons are ſecured. And this Rule of Church Admiſſion and Communion, furniſhed Chriſtians with Peace, Love and Unity for *many Ages*, ſetting aſide the *Ruffle* given them in the raſhneſs of *Victor* before mentioned. It was alſo rendred *practicable* and eaſie, by vertue of their Communion as Churches among themſelves: For from thence, *Commendatory Letters*, ſupplyed the Room of actual Profeſſion in them who having been admitted into one Church, did deſire the ſame Priviledge in any other. And on this Rule were Perſons to be received, though *weak in the Faith*, though it may be in ſome things *otherwiſe minded* than the generality of the Church, though *babes, and unſkilful*, as to degrees, in the word of Truth. But this Rule was alwayes attended with a Proviſo, that men did not contradict, or deſtroy their own Profeſſion by an unholy Converſation: For ſuch Perſons never were, nor ever are to be admitted unto the eſpecial Ordinances of the Church; and a neglect of due Attendance hereunto, is that which principally hath caſt

Ro. 14.1. *Phil.* 3. 15. *He.* 5.12 13, 14.

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us into all our Confuſions, and rendred the Inſtitutions of Chriſt ineffectual. And if this *warranty* which the Lord Chriſt hath given unto his Diſciples, of claiming a Participation in all the Priviledges of his Churches, and an Admiſſion unto a joynt-performance of all the Duties required in them, may, upon the ſuppoſition of a Power left to *impoſe other Conditions* of Communion on them, be rejected and rendred uſeleſs, all Church Communion is abſolutely reſolved into the variable wills of Men. The Church no doubt may judge and determine upon the *Laws of Chriſt*, and their due Application unto particular Occaſions; as whether ſuch Perſons may according to them be admitted into their Fellowſhip. To deprive Churches of this Liberty, is to take away their Principal Uſe and ſervice. But to *make Laws of their own*, the ſubject matter whereof ſhall be things not commanded by Chriſt, & to make them the *Rule* of admitting profeſſed Chriſtians unto their Communion, is an Aſſumption that cannot be juſtified. And it is certain, that the aſſuming of an Authority by ſome Churches for ſuch like Impoſitions, is that which hath principally occaſioned many to deny them *ſo to be*; ſo at once to overthrow the foundation of all that Authority, which in ſo many Inſtances they find to be abuſed. And although the Church of *Rome* may prevail on weak and credulous Perſons, by propoſing unto them an abſolute Acquieſcency in their Dictates and Determi-

nations, as the beſt, readieſt and moſt facile means of ſatisfaction; yet there is nothing that doth more alienate wiſe and conſcientious perſons from them, than doth that unreaſonable Propoſal. Moreover, it is highly probable that *endleſs Diſputes* will ariſe on this ſuppoſition, about what is *meet and convenient*, and what not, to be added unto the Scripture-Rules of Communion. They have done ſo in the Ages paſt, and continue yet ſo to do. Nor can any man on this Principle know, or probably conjecture, when he hath a *firm ſtation* in the Church, or an indefenſable intereſt in the Priviledges thereof. For ſuppoſing that he hath concocted the *Impoſitions of one Church*, on the firſt removal of his habitation, he may have new conditions of communion preſcribed unto him. And from this perplexity nothing can relieve him, but a reſolution to do in every place whereunto he may come, according to the *manner of the place*, beit good or bad, right or wrong. But neither hath the Lord Chriſt left his Diſciples at this *Uncertainty* which the Caſe ſuppoſeth; nor will accept of that *Indifferency* which is in the Remedy ſuggeſted. They therefore who regulate their Communion with any Churches, by the firm ſtated Law of their Right and Priviledge, if they are not received thereon, do not by their *abſtinence* from it, contract the Guilt of Schiſme or any blameable Diviſion.

Moreover, upon a ſuppoſition of ſuch a Liberty

berty and Power to preſcribe and impoſe unwritten conditions of Church-communion on Chriſtians, who, or what Law doth, or ſhall preſcribe *bounds* unto men, that they do not proceed in their Preſcriptions, beyond what is uſeful unto edification, or unto what will be really burdenſome and intolerable unto Churches. To ſay that thoſe who claim this *Power* may be ſecurely truſted with it, for they will be ſure not to fall into any ſuch Exceſſes, will ſcarcely give ſatisfaction: For beſides that ſuch a kind of Power is exceedingly apt to ſwell and extend it ſelf *unmeaſurably*, the common Experience of Chriſtendom lies againſt this Suggeſtion. Was not an Exceſs of this kind complained of by *Auſtin* of old, when yet the obſervation of *Eccleſiaſtical Cuſtomes* was much more voluntary than in after Ages; neither were they made abſolutely conditions of communion, unleſs among a very few? Do not all *Proteſtants* grant and plead that the *Papal Church* hath exceeded all bounds of moderation and Sobriety herein; ſo that from thence they take the principal warranty of their ſeceſſion from it? Do not other Churches mutually charge one another on the ſame account? Hath not a charge of this *Exceſs* been the Ball of Contention in this Nation ever ſince the Reformation? If then there be ſuch a Power in any, either the exerciſe of it is confined unto certain Inſtances by ſome power *ſuperior* unto them. or it is left abſolutely, as

unto all Particulars whereunto it may be extended, unto their own Prudence and Diſcretion. The firſt will not be aſſerted, nor can be ſo, unleſs the Inſtances intended can be recounted, and the *confirming power* be declared. If the latter be affirmed, then let them run into what *Exceſſes* they pleaſe, unleſs they judge themſelves that ſo they do, which is morally impoſſible that they ſhould, none ought ever to complain of what they do: For there is no failure in them who attend unto *their Rule*; which in this caſe is ſuppoſed to be mens own Prudence and Diſcretion. And this was directly the ſtate of things in the Church of *Rome*; whence they thought it alwayes exceedingly unequal that any of t' eir *Eccleſiaſtical Laws* ſhould be called in queſtion; ſince they made them according to their own Judgment, the ſole Rule of exerciſing their Authority in ſuch things. Where is the certainty and ſtability of this Rule? Is it probable that the communion and peace of all Churches, and all Chriſtians, are left to be regulated by it? And who will give aſſurance, that no *one Condition* directly unlawful in it ſelf ſhall be preſcribed and impoſed by perſons enjoying this pretended power? Or who can undertake that the number of ſuch Conditions as may be countenanced by a Plea of being things in their own nature *indifferent*, ſhall not be increaſed until they come to be ſuch a burden and yoke, as are too heavy for the Diſciples of Chriſt to bear, and unlawful for them to ſubmit themſelves unto?

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May any make a Judgment but themſelves, who impoſe them, when the number of ſuch things grows to a blameable exceſs? If others may judge, at leaſt for themſelves, & their own practice, and ſo of what is lawful or not, it is all that is deſired. If themſelves are the the *only Judges*, the caſe ſeems very hard, and our ſeceſſion from the *Church of Rome* ſcarcely warrantable. And who ſees not what endleſs Conteſts and Differences will enſue on theſe Suppoſitions, if the whole Liberty of mens Judgments, and all apprehenſions of Duty in Profeſſors, be not ſwallowed up in the Gulph of *Atheiſtical Indifferency*, as to all the Concerns of outward worſhip.

The whole of what hath been pleaded on this Head, might be confirmed with the teſtimony of many of the Learned writers of the Church of *England*, in the defence of our Seceſſion from that of *Rome*. But we ſhall not here produce them in particular. The ſum of what is pleaded by them, is, *That the Being of the Catholick Church lies in Eſſentials; that for a particular Church to diſagree from all other particular Churches in ſome extrinſecal and accidental things, is not to ſeparate from the Catholick Church, ſo as to ceaſe to be a Church; but ſtill whatever Church makes ſuch extrinſecal things the neceſſary conditions of Communion, ſo as to caſt men out of the Church, who yield not to them, is Schiſmatical in its ſo doing, and the Separation from it is ſo far from being Schiſme, that being caſt out of*

that

that Church on thoſe terms only, returns them unto the Communion of the Catholick Church. And nothing can be more unreaſonable, than that the Society impoſing ſuch conditions of communion, ſhould be judge whether thoſe conditions be juſt and equitable or no. To this purpoſe do they generally plead our common Cauſe. Wherefore, from what hath been diſcourſed, we doubt not but to affirm, that where *unſcriptural conditions* of communion, indiſpenſibly to be ſubmitted unto and obſerved, are by any Church impoſed on thoſe whom they expect or require to joyn in their Fellowſhip, Communion and Order; if they on whom they are ſo impoſed, do thereon with-hold or withdraw themſelves from the *communion of that Church*, eſpecially in the Acts, Duties and Parts of Worſhip, wherein a ſubmiſſion unto theſe conditions is exdreſſed either *verbally* or *virtually*, they are not thereon to be eſteemed guilty of *Schiſme*; but the whole fault of the Diviſions which enſue thereon, is to be charged on them who inſiſt on the neceſſity of their Impoſition.

That this is the condition of things with us at preſent, eſpecially ſuch as are *Miniſters of the Goſpel*, with reference unto the *Church of England*, as it is known in its ſelf, ſo it may be evidenced unto all, by an enumeration of the *Particulars* that are required of us, if we will be comprehended in the Communion and Fellowſhip thereof.

For 1. It is indiſpenſibly enjoyned that we give

give *a ſolemn Atteſtation unto the Liturgy, and all contained in it, by the ſubſcription or declaration of our Aſſent and Conſent thereunto*; which muſt be accompanied with the conſtant uſe of it in the whole Worſhip of God. As was before obſerved, we diſpute not now about the *Lawfulneſs* of the uſe of *Liturgies*, in the publick Service of the Church; nor of that in particular which is eſtabliſhed among us by the Laws of the Land. Were it only propoſed, or recommended unto Miniſters for the uſe of it in whole or in part, according as it ſhould be found needful unto the edification of their people, there would be a great *Alteration* in the caſe under conſideration. And if it be pretended, that ſuch a *Liberty* would produce great diverſity, yea and confuſion in the Worſhip of God, we can only ſay, that it did not ſo of old, when the Paſtors of Churches were left wholly to the exerciſe of their own *Gifts* and *Abilities* in all Sacred Adminiſtrations. But it is the making of an Aſſent and Conſent unto it, with the conſtant uſe of it, or attendance unto it, a *neceſſary condition* of all Communion with the Church, which at preſent is called into queſtion. It will not, we ſuppoſe, be denied, but that it is ſo made unto us all, both Miniſters and People; and that by ſuch Laws both *Civil* and *Eccleſiaſtical*, as are ſufficiently ſevere in their Penalties. For we have Rules and Meaſures of Church-communion aſſigned unto us, by *Laws* meerly *Civil*. Were there any colour

colour or pretence of denying this to be ſo, we ſhould proceed no farther in this Inſtance; but things are evidently and openly with us as here laid down. Now this *condition of communion* is *unſcriptural*; and the making of it to be ſuch a condition, is without warranty or countenance from the word of God, or the practice of the Apoſtolical and Primitive Churches. That there are no footſteps of any *Liturgy*, or preſcribed Forms for the adminiſtration of all Church-Ordinances to be impoſed on the the Diſciples of Chriſt in their Aſſemblies, to be found in the Scripture, no intimation of any ſuch thing, no direction about it, no command for it, will, we ſuppoſe, be acknowledged. Commanded indeed we are to *make Prayers* and ſupplications for all ſorts of men in our Aſſemblies, to inſtruct, lead, guide, and feed the Flock of Chriſt, to adminiſter the holy Ordinances inſtituted by him, and to do all theſe things *decently and in order*. The Apoſtles alſo deſcribing the work of the Miniſtry in their own attendance unto it, affirm that they would *give themſelves continually unto Prayer and the Miniſtry of the Word*. But that all theſe things ſhould be done (the Preaching of the word only excepted) in and by the uſe or reading of a Liturgy, and the preſcribed Forms of it, without variation or receding from the Words and Syllables of it in any thing, that the Scripture is utterly ſilent of. If any one be otherwiſe minded, it is incumbent

1 *Tim.* 2. 1.

Acts 20. 28.

1 *Pet.* 5. 2.

Act. 6. 4.

bent on him to produce Inſtances unto his purpoſe. But withall he muſt remember, that in this caſe it is required not only to produce a *warranty* from the Scripture for the uſe of ſuch Forms or *Liturgies*, but alſo that Rules are given therein, enabling Churches to make the conſtant attendance unto them, to be a neceſſary condition of their communion. If this be not done, nothing is offered unto the Caſe as at preſent ſtated. And whatever confidence may be made uſe of herein, we know that nothing unto this purpoſe can be thence produced. It is pleaded indeed that our Saviour himſelf compoſed a *Form of Prayer*, and preſcribed it unto his Diſciples: But it is not proved that he enjoyned them the *conſtant uſe* of it in their *Aſſemblies*, nor that they did ſo uſe it, nor that the repetition of it ſhould be a *condition of communion* in them, though the owning of it as by him propoſed, and for the Ends by him deſigned, may juſtly be made ſo; leaſt of all is it, or can it be proved, that any Rule or juſt encouragement can hence be taken for other men, who are neither *Jeſus Chriſt* nor his *Apoſtles*, but weak and fallible as our ſelves, to compoſe entire *Liturgies*, and impoſe the neceſſary uſe of them in all the worſhip of the Church.

Neither is there the leaſt countenance to be obtained unto ſuch Impoſitions, from the practiſe or example of the *firſt Churches*. Liturgies themſelves were an Invention of after-

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Ages, and the *uſe* of them now enquired after of a much later date. For thoſe which pretend unto *Apoſtolical antiquity*, have long ſince been convicted to be ſpurious and feigned: Nor is there ſcarce any Learned man who hath the confidence to aſſert them to be genuine. And on a ſuppoſition that *ſo they are*, no tollerable reaſon can be given why the uſe of them ſhould be neglected, and ſuch others taken up as are of a moſt uncertain Original. The firſt condition therefore of communion propoſed unto us, is not only *unſcriptural*, which is ſufficient unto our preſent Argument, but alſo deſtitute of any ancient Example or Uſuage among the Churches of Chriſt, to give countenance unto it. This if we admit not of, if we attend not unto, we are not only *refuſed communion* in other things, but alſo *excommunicated*, or caſt out of the whole communion of the Church, as many are at this day; yea ſome are ſo, not only for refuſing compliance with the whole of it in general; but for not obſerving every particular Direction belonging unto it (as might be manifeſted in Inſtances) of no great importance. If therefore any Diviſions or *Schiſmes* do enſue among us on this account; that ſome indiſpenſibly require an *Aſſent* and *Conſent* unto the *Liturgy*, and all things contained in it, as the condition of compleat Church-communion, or a neceſſary *attendance* on the whole Religious worſhip thereby performed, and therein

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preſcribed, which others refuſe to admit of as ſuch, and thereon *forbear the communion* propoſed unto them, it is evident from the Rules laid down, where the guilt of them is to be charged. And we do not diſcourſe of what any may do among themſelves, judging it meet for their *edification*, nor of what a *Civil Law* may conſtitute with reſpect unto publick places, Employments and Preferments, but only where lies the ſin, and evil, that attends *Diviſions* ariſing on theſe Impoſitions, and which, by their removal, would be taken away. And there ſeems to be an aggravation of this *Diſorder*, in that not only all men are refuſed *communion*, who will not ſubmit unto theſe Terms of it; but alſo they are *ſought out* and expoſed unto ſevere Penalties, if they will not admit of them, though expreſly contrary to their Conſciences and Perſwalions.

2. *Canonical Submiſſion* unto the preſent Eccleſiaſtical Government of the Church, and the Adminiſtration of the Diſcipline thereof, in their hands by whom the Power of it is poſſeſſed, with an Acquieſcency therein, are to the ſame purpoſe required of us, and expected from us. Who theſe are, and what are the Wayes and Means of their Adminiſtrations, we ſhall not repeat, as unwilling to give offence unto any. We cannot but know *how*, and in *what ſenſe* theſe things are propoſed unto us, and what is expected from us thereon. Neither dare we

we give *another ſenſe* of them in our minds, than what we judge to be the ſenſe and intention of them who require our ſubmiſſion and obedience unto them. It is not certainly their deſign nor mind, that we ſhould look on the *Offices* of the Church as *unwarrantable*, and on their Rule as inconvenient, ſo as to endeavour a *Reformation* in the one, and of the other. It is ſuch a conformity they intend, as whereby we do, *virtually* at leaſt, declare our approbation of all theſe things in the Church, and our acquieſcency in them. Neither can we be admitted to put in any *Exception*, nor diſcharge our Conſciences by a plain Declaration of what we diſlike or diſſent from, or in what ſenſe we can ſubmit unto any of theſe things. We take it therefore for granted, that in the conformity required of us, we muſt cordially and ſincerely approve the preſent Eccleſiaſtical Government, and the Adminiſtration of Church-Diſcipline thereby. For it is the profeſſion of our *Acceptance* of it, as propoſed unto us; and if we acquieſce not therein, but expreſs an uneaſineſs under it, we do it at the hazard of the Reputation of our Sincerity and Honeſty in conforming. Now this condition of communion with the *Church of England*, is alſo *unſcriptural*; and conſequently unlawful to be made ſo. This is by many now plainly acknowledged: For they ſay there is *no Government* determined in the Scripture. But this now in force amongſt

amongſt us, is erected by the Authority of the *Magiſtrate*, who hath *ſupream power* in things Eccleſiaſtical: And on that ground a *lawful Government* they plead it to be, and lawful to be exerciſed, and ſo alſo by others to be ſubmitted to. But we have now ſundry times declared that this is not our preſent Queſtion. We enquire not whether it be *Lawful* or no, or on what account it may be ſo eſteemed, or how far it may be ſubmitted unto, or wherein: But we ſay, the profeſſed acknowledging of it with ſubmiſſion unto it, as the *Government of the Church*, is required of us as a neceſſary condition of our communion. If they are not ſo, give us liberty to declare our ſenſe concerning it, without prejudice. And if it be ſo, then may we refuſe this condition, as *unſcriptural*. For in the caſe of Conformity, there is not only a ſubmiſſion to the Government required, but expreſly (as was ſaid) an approbation of it, that it is ſuch as it ought to be. For in Religious things our *practiſe* declares a cordial approbation; as being a part of our Profeſſion, wherein we ought to be ſincere. Some again make ſome Pleas, that *Biſhops*, and ſome Government by them, are appointed by the Apoſtles; and therefore a ſubmiſſion unto them may be juſtly required as a *condition of communion*. For we will not now diſpute, but that whatever is ſo *appointed*, may be ſo *required*; although we believe that every particular Inſtance of this nature, is not

rigidly to be inſiſted on, if it belong not unto the Eſſentials of the Church, and it be *dubious* to ſome whether it be ſo appointed or no. But yet neither doth an admittance of this *Plea*, give us any relief in this matter. For ſuppoſe it ſhould or might be proved, that there ought to be, according to the mind of Chriſt in all Churches, *Biſhops* with a pre-eminence above *Presbyters* in Order or Degree; and that the Rule of the Church doth principally belong unto them that are ſo; yet will not this Conceſſion bear an application to the preſent Queſtion, ſo as to afford us any Relief. For the granting of things ſo *dubious* and *queſtionable*, can never give them ſuch an evidence of Truth and firmitude in the Church, as to warrant the making of them *neceſſary conditions* of communion unto all Chriſtians. Neither doth it follow from any thing that pretendeth to fall under Scripture-proof, that ſuch Biſhops ſhould be *Dioceſan*; that they ſhould depend on *Archbiſhops* over them; that they ſhould aſſume the whole power of Church-Rule and Diſcipline into their hands; that they ſhould adminiſter it by *Chancellors, Archdeacons, Commiſſaries*, and the like; that this ſhould be done by Preſentments, or *Indictments*, Citations, Proceſſes, Litigious Pleadings, after the manner of *Secular or Civil Courts*, to the Excluſion of that Rule and Diſcipline which the Goſpel directs unto, with the mannagement of it in Love and Brotherly compaſſion in the

the Name and by the Spirit of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. But theſe things we ſhall not in particular inſiſt upon, for the Reaſon before given. This we muſt ſay, that take the *whole of the Government*, and the Adminiſtration thereof together, which by the conformity required of us we muſt teſtifie our *Approbation* of, and Acquieſcence in, or we deal hypocritically with them that require it of us; and we know it to be ſo far *unſcriptural*, as that an acknowledgment of it, and ſubmiſſion unto it, cannot duly and juſtly be made a *neceſſary condition* of communion unto us. It may be it will be ſaid, that *ſubmiſſion unto the Government of the Church*, is not ſo much a condition of communion with it, as it is that wherein our *communion it ſelf* with it, doth conſiſt; and it is but a Fancy to think of communion with a Church without it. But this is otherwiſe; as appears in thoſe Churches where all Rule and Government being left in the hand of the *Civil Magiſtrate*, there communion is meerly ſpiritual in the Adminiſtration of Evangelical Ordinances. And might but that be admitted, which, Nature, Reaſon, the Law of the Chriſtian Faith, and Goſpel-Obedience, do require, namely, that Church-fellowſhip and Communion be built upon mens *own Judgment and Choyce*; and this would go a great way towards the pacification of our Differences. But if this be ſo, and that all Church-communion conſiſts in *ſubmiſſion to the Govern-*

ment of it, or at leaſt that it doth ſo principally, it becomes them by whom it is owned and avowed ſo to do, to take care, that, that *Government* be derived from the Authority of Chriſt, and adminiſtred according to his Mind; or all *Church Communion*, properly ſo called, will be overthrown.

Thirdly, We are required to uſe and obſerve the *Ceremonies* in Worſhip which the preſent Church hath appointed, or doth uſe and obſerve. This alſo is made a *neceſſary condition* of Communion unto us. For many are at this day actually caſt out of all Communion for not obſerving of them. Some are ſo proceeded againſt for not obſerving of *Holy dayes*; ſome for not *Kneeling at the Sacrament* of the Lords Supper; ſome for not uſing the *Sign of the Croſs* in Baptiſm; and what would become of Miniſters that ſhould neglect or omit to wear the *Surplice* in Sacred Adminiſtrations, is eaſie to conjecture. But theſe things are all of them unwritten and *unſcriptural*. Great and many indeed have been the Diſputes of learned men, to prove that although they have no Divine Inſtitution, nor yet example of Apoſtolical or Primitive practiſe, yet that they may be *Lawfully uſed* for *Decency and Order* in the Worſhip of God. Whether they have evinced what they aimed at, is as yet undetermined. But ſuppoſing in this Caſe all to be as they would pretend, and plead that it ſhould be, yet becauſe they are all granted to be *Arbitrary inventions of men*, and very few

of

of thoſe who make uſe of them are agreed what is their proper uſe and ſignification, or whether they have any or no, they are altogether unmeet to be made a *neceſſary condition* of Communion. For enquiry may be made, on what Warranty, or by what Rule they may be appointed ſo to be? Thoſe who preſide in, and over the Churches of Chriſt, do ſo in his Name, and by his Authority: And therefore they can *impoſe nothing* on them as a Condition of their Communion together, but what his Name is upon, or what they have his Authority for: And it will be dangerous to ſet his *Seal* unto our own Appointments. For what men think meet to do *themſelves* in the matters of the Houſe of God and his Worſhip, it may be meaſured and accepted with him according to their Light and Deſign: But for what they *impoſe on others*, and that under no leſs penalty than the deprivation of the outward Adminiſtration of all the Priviledges procured for them by Jeſus Chriſt, they ought to have his Warrant and Authority for. And their Zeal is to be *bewailed*, who not only caſt men out of all Church Communion, ſo far as in them lyeth, for a refuſal to obſerve thoſe *voluntarily impoſed Ceremonies* in ſacred Worſhip, but alſo proſecute them with outward force to the Ruine of them and their Fa nilies; and we cannot but wonder that any ſhould as yet think meet to make uſe of *Priſons*, and the deſtruction of men thereby, as an *Appendix* of their Eccleſiaſtical Diſcipline, exerciſed in

the higheſt ſeverity, on no greater Occaſions than the omiſſion of the obſervance of theſe Ceremonies. Whether ſuch proceedings are meaſured by *preſent Intereſt*, or the due conſideration of what will be pleaſing to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt at the laſt day, is not difficult to determine.

Fourthly, As we are *Miniſters* there is in ſome caſes required of us under the ſame penalty, an *Oath of Canonical obedience*. We need not labour to prove this to be *unſcriptural*; nor, to avoid provocations, ſhall at preſent declare the Riſe, Nature and Uſe of it, with the fierce Digladiations that have formerly been about it. We can look upon it no otherwiſe. but as that which is contrary to the Liberty, and unworthy of the Office of a Miniſter of the Goſpel.

We know not any thing elſe which is required of us unto the end mentioned, unleſs it be of ſome a *Subſcription unto the Articles of Religion*. And this, becauſe the Scripture enjoyns unto all a *Conſent* unto ſound Doctrine, and a *Form of wholſome words*, may be admitted ſo far as thoſe Articles concern only Points of Faith; But whereas there is annexed unto them, and enjoyned with other things, an *Approbation* of all thoſe Inſtances of Conditions of Communion, before inſiſted on, a *Subſcription* unto the whole becomes of the ſame Nature with the things themſelves therein approved of.

Theſe are the *Conditions of Communion* with the

the Church of *England*, which are propoſed unto us, and which we are indiſpenſibly to ſubmit unto, if we intend to be partakers thereof; and theſe are all which we know, of that nature. That any of theſe are in particular *preſcribed in the Word of God*, much leſs that they can derive any Warranty from thence to be made *neceſſary conditions of Church-Communion*, will not we ſuppoſe be pretended by any. If therefore any *Diviſions* do enſue on the refuſal of ſome to admit of theſe Conditions, the *Guilt* of them cannot by any Rule of Scripture, or from any example of the firſt Churches, be charged on them who make that refuſal. Other groundleſs Accuſations and Charges we value not; for this is but *Mans Day*, the Judgment whereof we neither ſtand nor fall unto. Yea, we eſteem our ſelves obliged, in all peaceableneſs and ſobriety to *bear witneſs* againſt ſuch impoſitions, and unto that Liberty wherewith the Lord Chriſt hath made his Churches and Diſciples free. And if once things were come unto that ſtate, that men would aſſign no other *Terms of Church Communion*, than what Chriſt hath appointed, it would quickly appear where the guilt of our Diviſions would remain, if any ſuch Diviſions would yet remain. But ſo long as there is a deſire to make the Wills and Wiſdomes of ſome men, fallible even as others, the *Rule* and meaſure of obedidience in ſpiritual things, an end of ſtrife and contention among Chriſtians, will be expected in vain. And this we ſay, with hearts in

ſome meaſure ſenſible, and pained, to ſee the *Body of Chriſt* torn in pieces, by the luſts, paſſions, and carnal intereſts of men. Could we contribute any thing to the healing of the Wounds and Ruptures that are amongſt Chriſtians, provided it may have a *conſiſtency* with the mind of Chriſt, and the Duty we owe unto him, (as indeed nothing elſe will really contribute any thing thereunto) we ſhould with all readineſs and faithfulneſs give up our beſt endeavours therein. And where we can do nothing elſe, we hope we ſhall bear with *Patience* thoſe diſdainful Reproaches which the *Pride of men*, blown up by a confluence of ſecular periſhing advantages, prompts them to pour out upon us, for our non-compliance with their Impoſitions.

Secondly, By the *Conformity* required of us, we muſt conſent unto the *Omiſſion of ſundry Duties*, which are made ſo unto us by the Command and Appointment of Jeſus Chriſt. If we are at any time *hindred* in the diſcharge of any neceſſary Duty by others, we have ſomwhat to plead in our own excuſe: But if we our ſelves *voluntarily* conſent to the neglect or omiſſion of them, we cannot avoyd the guilt of ſin. And the worſt way whereby ſuch a conſent may be expreſſed, is by *compact* and agreement with others; as though it were in our Power to *bargain* with other men, what Duties we will obſerve, and what we will omit in the Worſhip of God. Now in the *Conformity* required of us, we are to give this conſent, and

and that as it were by Compact and Agreement, which deprives us of all pretence of excuſe in our omiſſions. It is no time afterward to plead that we *would diſcharge ſuch Duties*, were we not hindred or forbidden. We have our ſelves antecedently and *voluntarily* renounced a concern in ſuch forbidden Duties. For no man can *honeſtly conform*, but it is with a declared Reſolution to accept of all the Terms and Conſequents of it, with an Approbation of them. Under this Notion it is, that we look on Conformity; and what others apprehend thereby, or underſtand therein, who ſeem to preſs men to *conform* unto what they do not *approve*, we know not. If then there be any omiſſion of known Duties inſeparably accompanying our *Conformity*, that thereby we ſolemnly conſent unto.

This therefore we are obliged to *refuſe*, becauſe without ſin, in the *voluntary* neglect and omiſſion of Duty, we cannot comply with it; which therefore can be no *Schiſm* in us, nor what might in any way render us blameable. The Lord Chriſt hath preſcribed no ſuch Law of *Unity and Peace* unto his Churches, as that his Diſciples ſhould be bound conſtantly to neglect any *known* Duty, which they owe to himſelf, for their ſakes. Nor do his Inſtitutions interfere, that the obſervance of any one, ſhould exclude a due attendance unto another. Neither doth he by his commands, bring any one into a neceſſity of doing that which is evil, or of *omitting* any thing that is required

of

of him in the way of Duty. However therefore we value Church-Peace and Union, we dare not purchaſe it, by an *Abrenunciation* of any Duty we owe to Jeſus Chriſt, nor would an Agreement procured on ſuch Terms be of any uſe unto us, or of advantage to the Church its ſelf. Wherefore that complyance in Church communion which would be obſtructive of any *neceſſary Dutyes*, is not by the Lord Chriſt enjoyned us, and therefore its omiſſion cannot be culpable in us, but it would its ſelf be our ſin: Eſpecially would it be thus, where the Duties ſo to be omitted, are ſuch as are incumbent on us, by virtue of *eſpecial Office*, wherein we are peculiarly required to be faithful. It remaineth therefore only, that we declare wherein we ſhould by *conformity* engage unto the omiſſion of ſuch Duties as are indiſpenſibly required of us. And this we ſhall do in ſome few Inſtances.

(1) Every Miniſter of the Goſpel hath by the Appointment of Jeſus Chriſt, the *whole immediate Care* of the Flock, whereof he is *Overſeer*, committed unto him. That no part hereof which belongs unto their Edification is exempted from him, the *Charge* that is given unto him, and the *Account* which will be expected from him, do ſufficiently evidence. For as Miniſters are called *Overſeers*, *Rulers*, *Guides*, *Paſtors*, and the like; ſo are they commanded to *feed the Flock*, to *take the Overſight of it*, and to *Rule the Houſe of God*, a diſcharge of all which muſt come into their Account.

Acts 20. 17. 28. 1 *Tim.* 3. 5. 1 *Pet.* 5. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. *Heb.* 5. 17.

Account. Nor is there any word ſpoken in the whole Scripture, relating to the Rule and Government of the Church, which is not ſpoken principally with reſpect unto them. Nor is there the leaſt Intimation of an *Exemption* of any *Part* of the Diſcipline of the Goſpel, from their Office or Care. If it be pretended that there is, let the Places be produced wherein ſuch an Exemption is made, or any Inſtances of it among the firſt Churches, and they ſhall be conſidered; for hitherto no ſuch thing hath been attempted, that we know of. Nor is it at all concluded, from the Plea, that ſome are appointed unto a *Superior Degree* above others in the Rule of the Church. For a man may have the *whole Rule* of his Flock committed unto him, although he ſhould be obliged to give an Account unto others of his Diſcharge thereof. It is therefore the Duty of all Miniſters of the Goſpel, not only to to Teach, Inſtruct and Preach to their Flocks, but to go before them alſo in *Rule and Government*, and in the Exerciſe of the Spiritual Diſcipline appointed in the Goſpel, in the Order wherein it is appointed for their Edification. The *keys of the Kingdome of Heaven* are committed unto them, or they are not: If they are not, by what Authority do they take upon them to *open and ſhut* in the Houſe of God, in Miniſterial teaching, and authoritative Adminiſtration of ſacred Ordinances? For theſe things belong unto the Authority which is given by Chriſt under that *Metaphorical*

phorical Expreſſion of the *Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*; the Reaſon of the Alluſion and its Application, being obvious. And if theſe are not received by any, they are Uſurpers, if they undertake to adminiſter unto the Church *authoritatively* in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt. If they are given or granted unto them, how may it be made to appear that they are ſo, for the *Ends mentioned only*, but not for the Rule and Government of the Church, which alſo belongs unto them? where is the Exception in the grant made to them? where are the Limits aſſigned unto their *Power*, that they ſhall exerciſe it in ſome concerns of the *Kingdom of Heaven*, but not in others? And whereas the greateſt and moſt neceſſary Parts of this Power, ſuch as are Miniſterial Teaching, and the Adminiſtration of the Sacraments, are confeſſedly committed unto them, how comes it to paſs that the *leſs* ſhould be reſerved from them? For whereas the former are neceſſary to the very *Being* of the Church, the latter are eſteemed by ſome ſcarcely to belong unto it. To ſay that *Biſhops* only receive theſe *Keys*, and commit or lend the Uſe of them to others, for ſuch Ends and Purpoſes as they are pleaſed to Limit, is both forreign to the Scripture, and deſtructive of all *Miniſterial* Power. And if Miniſters are not the Miniſters of Chriſt, but of Men; if they have not their Authority from him, but from others; if that may be *parcelled* out unto them which they have from him,

him, at the Pleaſure of any over them, there needs not much contending about them or their Office.

Beſides, the *Relation* of theſe things one to another is ſuch, as that if they are abſolutely ſeparated, their Efficacy unto Edification will be exceedingly impaired, if not deſtroyed. If thoſe who have the Diſpenſation of the Word committed unto them, have not Liberty and Authority; if it be not part of their *Office*-Duty, to *watch over them* unto whom it is diſpenſed, and that accompanyed with Spiritual weapons, *Mighty through God*, towards the fulfilling of the Obedience of ſome, and the *revenging of Diſobedience* in others; if they have no Power to Judge, admoniſh or Cenſure them that walk unanſwerably to the Doctrine of the Goſpel preached unto them, and whoſe Profeſſion they have taken upon them; they will be diſcouraged in the purſuit of their work, and the Word it ſelf be deprived of an helpful Means appointed by Chriſt himſelf to farther its Efficacy. And thoſe who ſhall content themſelves with the *Preaching of the Word only*, without an Enquiry after its Succeſs in the Minds and Lives of them that are committed to their Charge, by virtue of that Care and Authoritative Inſpection which indeed belongs to their Office, will find that as they do diſcharge but *one Part* of their Duty, ſo they will grow cold and Languid therein alſo. And when there hath been better Succeſs, as there hath

hath, where ſome againſt their wills have been hindred by Power from the Exerciſe of the *Charge* laid on them by Chriſt in this matter, making up as they were able by *private Solicitude* and Perſwaſion, what they were excluded from attending unto in publick Miniſterial Acts, it hath been an Effect of eſpecial favour from God, not to be ordinarily expected on the account of any Rule. And thence it is, that for the moſt part things openly and viſibly do fall out otherwiſe; the *People* being little reformed in their Lives, and *Preachers* waxing cold and formal in their work. And if the *Cenſures* of the Church, are adminiſtred by them who preach not the Word unto the People, they will be weak and enervous as unto any Influence on the Conſciences of Men. Their minds indeed may be affected by them, ſo far as they are attended with *outward Penalties*; but how little this tends unto the Promotion of Holineſs, or the Reformation of Mens Lives, Experience doth abundantly teſtifie. Church Diſcipline and Cenſures are appointed merely and ſolely, to *ſecond*, *confirm*, and eſtabliſh the word, and to vindicate it from abuſe and contempt, as expreſſing the ſenſe that Jeſus Chriſt hath of *them* by whom it is received, and of *them* by whom it is deſpiſed. And it is the word alone which gives Authority unto *Diſcipline* and Cenſures. Where therefore they are ſo *ſeparated*, as that thoſe by whom the Word is adminiſtred, are excluded from an Intereſt in the

the Exerciſe of Diſcipline; and thoſe unto whom the Adminiſtration of Diſcipline is committed, are ſuch as neither do, nor for the moſt part ought to preach the word, it cannot be, but that the Efficacy and ſucceſs of them both will be impeded.

It is ſo alſo as to the Adminiſtration of the *Sacraments*, eſpecially that of the *Supper of the Lord*. Theſe are the principal Myſteries of our Religion, as to its external Form and Adminiſtration; the Sacred *Rites* whereby all the Grace, Mercy, and Priviledges of the Goſpel are ſealed and confirmed unto them who are in a due manner made partakers of them. About them therefore, and their orderly Adminiſtration, did the *Primitive Church* alwayes uſe their utmoſt care and diligence: And theſe in an eſpecial manner did they make uſe of, with reſpect unto *them*, to whom they were to be communicated. For they feared, partly, leſt men ſhould be made *partakers of them* to their diſadvantage, being not ſo qualified, as to receive them to their benefit; as knowing, that where perſons through their own defaults, obtain not *Spiritual profit* by them, they are in no ſmall danger of having them turned into a Snare; and partly, that theſe holy and ſacred Inſtitutions themſelves might neither be prophaned, contaminated, nor expoſed unto contempt. Hence, of thoſe who *gave up their Names* unto the Church, and took upon them the Profeſſion of the Goſpel, the greateſt part were

were continued for a long ſeaſon under their *Care and Inſpection*, but were not admitted into the Society of the Church in thoſe Ordinances, until upon good trial they were approved. And if any one after his *Admittance*, was found to walk unanſwerably unto his Profeſſion, or to fall into any *known Sin*, whence Offence did enſue among the *Faithful*, he was immediately dealt withal in the Diſcipline of the Church; and in caſe of Impeniteney, ſeparated from the Congregation. Nor did the *Guides* or *Paſtors* of the Churches think they had any greater Truſt committed unto them, than in this, that they ſhould uſe their utmoſt *Care and Diligence*, that perſons unmeet and unworthy might not be admitted into that Church-Relation, wherein they ſhould have a right to approach unto the Table of the Lord; and to remove from thence, ſuch as had demeaned themſelves unworthy of that communion. This they looked on as belonging unto their *Miniſterial Office*, and as a Duty required of them in the diſcharge thereof, by Jeſus Chriſt. And herein they had ſufficient Direction, both in the *Rule of the Word*, as alſo in the *Nature of the Office* committed unto them, and of the work wherewith they were intruſted. For all Miniſters are *Stewards of the Myſteries of Chriſt*, of whom it is required that they ſhould be faithful. Now as it belongs unto a *faithful Steward* to diſtribute unto the Houſhold of his Lord the proviſion

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which he hath made for them, and allows unto them, in due ſeaſon; ſo alſo to keep off thoſe from partaking in them, who without his *Maſters* Order and Warrant, would intrude themſelves into his Family, and unjuſtly poſſeſs themſelves of the Priviledges of it. In theſe things doth the Faithfulneſs of a *Steward* conſiſt. And the ſame is required in *Miniſters* of the Goſpel, with reſpect unto the Houſhold of their Lord and Maſter, and the Proviſion that he hath made for it. Theſe therefore being undeniably parts of of the duty of faithful Paſtors or Miniſters, it is evident how many of them we muſt ſolemnly *renounce* a concernment in, upon a compliance with the conformity, in matter and manner, required of us. Neither are theſe Duties ſuch as are of light importance; or ſuch as may be *omitted* without any detriment unto the Souls of men. The Glory of Chriſt, the Honour of the Goſpel, the Purity of the Church, and its Edification, are greatly concerned in them. And they in whoſe minds a neglect of theſe things is countenanced by their attendance unto ſome *outward Forms* and Appearances of Order, have ſcarcely conſidered him aright, with whom they have to do. Some therefore of theſe Duties we ſhall inſtance in. Firſt, It is the Duty of all faithful Miniſters of the Goſpel, to conſider aright who are ſo *admitted* into the Church, as to obtain a *Right* thereby unto a Participation of all its Holy Ordinan-

ces. Take care they muſt, that none who have that Right granted them by the Law of Chriſt, be diſcouraged or excluded; nor any *altogether unworthy* admitted. And hereunto, as it is generally acknowledged, a *credible Profeſſion* of Repentance, Faith and Obedience, that is of thoſe which are ſincere and ſaving, is required. To neglect an Enquiry after theſe things, in thoſe that are to be admitted unto the *Table of the Lord*, is to proſtitute the Holy Ordinances of the Goſpel unto contempt and abuſe; and to run croſs to the conſtant practice of the Church in all *Ages*, even under its greateſt degeneracy. And the *Right Diſcharge* of this Duty, if we may be allowed to be in earneſt in ſpiritual things; if it be believed, that it is internal Grace and Holineſs, for the ſake whereof, all outward Adminiſtrations are inſtituted, and celebrated; is of great weight and importance to the Souls of men. For on the part of perſons to be admitted, if they are *openly* and *viſibly* unworthy, what do we thereby, but what lies in us, to deſtroy their Souls? It cannot be, but that their hardning and impenitency in ſin, will be hazarded thereby. For whereas they have granted unto them the moſt *Solemn Pledge* of the Lord Chriſt's Acceptance of them, and of his Approbation of their ſtate towards God, that the Church is authorized to give; what reaſon have they to think that their condition is *not ſecure*, or to attend unto the Doctrine of

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the Church, preſſing them to look after a change and relinquiſhment of it? For although the adminiſtration of the *Sealing Ordinances* doth not abſolutely ſet the Approbation of Chriſt unto every individual perſon made partaker of them; yet it doth abſolutely do ſo to the *Profeſſion* which they make. They witneſs in the Name of Chriſt, his *Approbation* of it, and therewithal of all perſons according to their real Intereſt in it, and anſwering of it. But thoſe who in no conſiderable Inſtances do anſwer this Profeſſion, can obtain nothing unto themſelves but an occaſion of *hardning*, and rendring them ſecure in a ſtate of Impenitency. For tell men whilſt you pleaſe of the neceſſity of *Converſion to God*, of Reformation and a holy Life, yet if in the courſe of their *Unholineſs*, you confirm unto them the *Love of Chriſt*, and give them Pledges of their ſalvation by him, they will not much regard your other Exhortations. And thence it is come to paſs in the world, that the *conformity* (worth that we contend about ten thouſand times over) which ought to be between the *Preaching of the Word*, the *Adminiſtration* of the Sacraments, and the *Lives* of them who are Partakers of them, is for the moſt part loſt. The Word ſtill declares, that without *Regeneration*, without *ſaving Faith*, Repentance and Obedience, none can enter into the Kingdom of God. In the *Adminiſtration* of the other Ordinances, there is an abatement

made of this rigorous determination, and men have their ſalvation aſſured unto them without a *credible profeſſion*, yea, or a pretence of theſe Qualifications: And the *Lives* of the moſt who live in the enjoyment of theſe things, ſeem to declare, that they neither believe the one, nor much regard the other.

In the mean time, the Church it ſelf, as to its *Purity*, and the holineſs of its communion, is dammaged by the neglect of a careful inſpection into this Duty: For it cannot be, but that Ignorance, Worldlineſs, and Prophaneneſs will ſpread themſelves as a *Leproſie* over ſuch a Church; whence their communion will be of very little uſe and advantage unto Believers. And hereby do Churches, which ſhould be the *Glory of Chriſt*, by their expreſſion of the Purity, Holineſs and excellency of his Perſon and Doctrine, become the principal Means and Occaſions of his *Diſhonour* in the world; and he that ſhall read that Chriſt *loved his Church, and gave himſelf for it, that he might ſanctifie and cleanſe it with the waſhing of water by the Word; that he might preſent it unto himſelf a glorious Church, not having ſpot or wrinkle, or any ſuch thing, but that it ſhould be holy and without blemiſh*; will be much to ſeek after the Effects of this Deſign of Chriſt in his Love and Death, if he meaſure them by what appears in *Churches* under the power and influence of this neglect. Nor

Eph. 5. 25, 26, 27.

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do thoſe who plead for the continuance of things in ſuch a ſtate without *Reformation*, ſufficiently conſider the Repreſentation that the Lord Chriſt made of himſelf, when he was about to deal with his Churches, ſome of which were overtaken with careleſneſs and negligence in this matter: And yet hath he therein laid down a *Rule*, as to what kind of proceedings *Particular Churches* are to expect from him in all Generations. And it is a matter of no ſmall *Amazement*, that any Churches dare approve and applaud themſelves in ſuch a ſtate of impurity and defection, as is evidently condemned by him, in thoſe primitive patterns. Do men think he is *changed*, or that he will approve in them, what he judged and condemned in others? Or do they ſuppoſe he minds theſe things no more; and becauſe he is *unſeen*, that he *ſeeth not*; But we ſhall all find at length that he is the ſame *yeſterday, to day, and for ever*; and that as the Judge of all, he ſtands at the door.

Now this Duty, by *conformity* we renounce a concernment in, ſo as to attend unto it, by virtue of *Miniſterial Authority*; whence the guilt of all the evil conſequents thereof before mentioned, muſt fall on us. For it is known, that a meer ſhadow of the work of this Duty, and not ſo much as a ſhadow of *Authority* for it, would be left unto us: For what is allowed in caſe of a ſudden *emergency*, upon an Offence taken by the *whole Con-*

gregation at the wickedneſs of any, (which is inſtructed beforehand, that this ought to be no matter of offence unto them) as it may be it cannot be proved ever to have been obſerved in any one Inſtance, ſo the allowed exerciſe of it would yield no relief in this caſe. And if any one ſhould extend the *Rule* beyond the interpretation that is put upon it by the preſent *current adminiſtration* of Church-Diſcipline, there is no great queſtion to be made what entertainment he would meet withal for his ſo doing. And it is to no purpoſe to come into the Church, as it were on purpoſe to go out again. And if inſtead of dealing with the Souls and Conſciences of men, in the Name and Authority of Chriſt, as *Stewards of his Myſteries*, any can content themſelves, to be *Informers* of Crimes unto others, we deſire their pardon, if we cannot comply with them therein. And this is the Sum of what at preſent we are pleading about. It is the duty of *Miniſters* of particular Churches, to judge and take care concerning the fitneſs of them, according unto the Rules of the Goſpel, and the Nature of the Duty required of them, who are to be *admitted* into the Fellowſhip of the Church, and thereby unto a participation of all the holy Ordinances thereof. This Charge the Lord Chriſt hath committed unto them, and hereof will require an Account from them. Upon the neglect, or right diſcharge of this Duty, *Conſequents* of great moment do depend;

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yea the due attendance unto it, hath a great Influence into the Preſervation of the *Being* of the Church, and is the Hinge whereon the well-being of it doth turn. But the power of exerciſing *Miniſterial Authority* in a juſt attendance unto this Duty, we muſt renounce in our conformity, if we ſhould ſubmit thereunto. For we have ſhewed before, that after we have *conformed*, we can pretend no excuſe from what is enjoyned us, or forbidden unto us by virtue thereof, all being founded in our own voluntary act and conſent. Hence the guilt of this *Omiſſion* muſt wholly fall on us, which we are not willing to undergo.

There are we know many *Objections* raiſed againſt the committing of this Power and Truſt unto the Miniſters of particular Congregations. Great *Inconveniences* are pretended as the conſequents of it. The Ignorance and Unfitneſs of moſt Miniſters for the diſcharge *of ſuch a Truſt*, if it ſhould be committed unto them, the *Arbitrarineſs* and partiality which probably others will exerciſe therein, the *Yoke* that will be brought on the people thereby, and diſorder in the whole, are uſually pleaded to this purpoſe, and inſiſted on.

But 1. This *Truſt* is committed unto ſome or other by Chriſt himſelf, and it is neceſſary that ſo it ſhould be. Never did he appoint, nor is it meet, nor was it ever practiſed in the Primitive Church, that *every one*

ſhould at his pleaſure, on his own preſumptions, intrude himſelf into a participation of the holy things of the Houſe of God. The conſideration of *Mens Habitations*, with their Age, and the like, are of *no conſideration* with reſpect unto any Rule of the Goſpel. Either therefore it muſt be left unto the pleaſure and will of every man, be he never ſo ignorant, wicked or profligate, to impoſe himſelf on the *communion of any Church* of Chriſt, or there muſt be a Judgment in the Church, concerning them who are to be admitted unto their communion.

2. From the firſt planting of Chriſtian Religion, thoſe who *preached th' Goſpel* unto the converſion of the Souls of men; were principally intruſted with this Power, and it was their duty to *gather* them who were ſo converted, into that Church-Order and Fellowſhip wherein they might partake of the Sacred Myſteries, or ſolemn Ordinances of the Chriſtian Worſhip. And this courſe of proceeding continued uninterrupted, with ſome little variation in the manner of the exerciſe of this Power and Duty, until *Corruption* had ſpread it ſelf over the face of the whole profeſſing Church in the world: But ſtill a ſhadow and reſemblance of it was retained, and in the *Papal Church* it ſelf to this day, particular *Confeſſors* are eſteemed competent Judges of the meetneſs of their *Penitents* for an admiſſion unto the Sacraments of their Church. And who ſhall now

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be eſteemed more meet for the diſcharge of this duty, than thoſe who ſucceed in the Office and Work of *Preaching the Word*, whereby men are prepared for Church-Society? And as it is a thing utterly unheard of in Antiquity, that thoſe who *diſpenſed the Word* unto the Illumination and Converſion of men, ſhould not have the power of their diſpoſal as to their being *added to the Church*, or ſuſpended for a time, as there was occaſion; ſo it is as uncouth, that thoſe who now ſuſtain the ſame Place and Office unto the ſeveral Congregations attending on their Miniſtry, ſhould be deprived of it.

3. If there be that *Ignorance* and Diſability in Miniſters, as is pretended, the blame of it reflects on them by whom they are made. And we are not obliged to accommodate any of the Wayes or Truths of Chriſt unto the *Sins* and *Ignorance* of men. And if they are inſufficient for this work, how come they to be ſo ſufficient for that which is greater; namely to *divide the Word aright* unto all their Hearers? But we ſpeak of ſuch Miniſters as are *competently qualified* according to the Rule of the Goſpel, for the diſcharge of their Office; and no other ought there to be. And ſuch there are, bleſſed be God, through the watchful care of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt over his Church, and his Supplies of the Gifts of his Spirit unto them. And ſuch as theſe know it is their *Duty* to ſtudy, meditate, pray, *ask Counſel* and advice of others, perhaps

haps of more Wiſdom and Experience than themſelves, that they may know how in all things to *behave themſelves in the Houſe of God.* Nor will God be wanting unto them who in ſincerity ſeek direction from him, for the diſcharge of any Duty which he calls them unto. Other ſecurity of regular, orderly, and uſeful proceedings in this matter, Chriſt hath not given us; nor do we need: For the due Obſervance of *his* Appointments, will not fail the attaining of *his* Ends; which ought to be ours alſo.

4. The Judgment and acting of the Church-Officers in the *Admiſſion* of perſons into the compleat Society of the Faithful, is not *arbitrary*, as is pretended. They have the *Rule* of the Scripture, which they are diligently to attend unto. This is the entire Rule which the Lord Chriſt hath left unto his Church, both for their Doctrine and Diſcipline: Whatever is beyond this, or beſide it, is not his, nor owned by him. What is not done according to this Rule, is of no force in the *Conſciences of men*, though it may ſtand, until lawfully recalled, for the preſervation of outward Order. And whatever *Arbitrarineſs* may be ſuppoſed, in making a judgment upon the Rule of the Word, or in the Application of its Rule unto the preſent Caſe, it muſt abide in ſome or other. And who ſhall be thought more meet, or able to make a right determination thereon, than thoſe whoſe *Duty* it is, and who have the advantage to

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be acquainted with all Circumſtances belonging to the Caſe propoſed. Beſides, there is the Judgment of the *Church*, or the *Congregation* it ſelf, which is greatly to be regarded. Even in the *Church of England* a ſuſpenſion of any from the Lords Supper, is allowed unto the *Curate*, upon the Offence of the *Congregation*; which is a ſufficient evidence, that a Judgment in this Caſe is owned to be their due: For none can take *Offence*, but upon a Judgment of the Matter at which he is offended; nor in this caſe, without a right to determine that *ſome Offences* ought to debar Perſons from a participation of the holy Ordinances; as alſo what thoſe Offences are. This therefore is to be conſidered as an Aid and Aſſiſtance unto *Miniſters* in the diſcharge of their Duty. It is the Church into whoſe communion perſons are to be admitted. And although it be no way neceſſary, that determinations in this Caſe ſhould be always made by *Suffrage*, or a *Plurality of Votes* in the Body of the Church; yet if the Senſe or Mind of the *Congregation* may be known, or is ſo, (upon the Enquiry that ought to be made unto that purpoſe) that any perſons are unmeet for their communion, it is not convenient they ſhould be received; nor will their *Admiſſion* in this caſe be of any advantage to themſelves or the Church. The Light of Reaſon, and the Fundamental conſtitutive Principles of all *Free Societies*, ſuch as the Church is, aſcribe this

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Acts 9. 26, 27, 28. *Ro.* 14. 1. Liberty unto it; and the Primitive Church practiſed accordingly: So alſo is the judgment and Deſire of the *Congregation* to be conſidered in the admiſſion of any, if they are made known to the Guides of it. For it is expected from them, they ſhould *confirm their Love* unto them without diſſimulation, as Members of the ſame Body; and therefore in their approbation of what is done, their Rulers have Light and Encouragement in their own Duty. Beſides, there is appointed, and ought to be preſerved a *communion among Churches themſelves*: By virtue hereof, they are not only to make uſe of *mutual Aid*, Advice and Counſel, antecedently unto all things of Importance; but each *particular* Church is upon juſt demand to give an account unto other Churches of what they do in the Adminiſtration of the Ordinances of the Goſpel among them; and if in any thing it hath miſtaken or miſcarried, to *rectifie* them upon their Advice and Judgment. And it were eaſie to manifeſt how through theſe Means and Advantages, the *Edification* of the Church, and the *Liberty* of Chriſtians, is ſufficiently ſecured, in that *diſcharge of Duty* which is required in the Paſtors of the Churches, about the *Admiſſion* of perſons unto a Participation of holy ordinances in them.

5. This Duty therefore, muſt either be *wholly neglected*, which will unavoidably tend to the corrupting and debauching of all Churches,

ches, and in the end unto their Ruine; or it muſt be attended unto by each *particular Church* under the conduct of their Guides and Rulers; or ſome others muſt take it upon themſelves. What hath been the iſſue of a Suppoſal, that it may be diſcharged in the *latter way*, is too well known, to be inſiſted on: For whilſt thoſe who undertake the *Exerciſe* of Church-Power, are ſuch as do not diſpenſe *the Word*, or preach it unto them, towards whom it is to be exerciſed, but are ſtrangers unto their ſpiritual ſtate, and all the Circumſtances of it; whilſt they have no way to *act* or *exerciſe* their preſumed Authority, but by *Citations*, *Proceſſes*, *Informations* and *Penalties*, according to the manner of Secular Courts of Judicature in Cauſes Civil and Criminal; and whilſt the Adminiſtration of it is committed unto men, utterly unacquainted with, and inconcerned in the *Diſcipline* of the Goſpel, or the preſervation of the Church of Chriſt in Purity and Order; and whilſt herein, many, the moſt, or all of them who are ſo employed, have thereby outward *Emoluments* and Advantages, which they do principally regard; the due and proper care of the right Order of the Churches, unto the Glory of Chriſt, and their own Edification, is utterly omitted and loſt. It is true, many think this the only *decent*, *uſeful* and expedient *way* for the Government of the Church, and think it wondrous unreaſonable that others will not ſubmit

mit thereunto, and acquieſce therein. But what would they have us do? or what is it that they would perſwade us unto? Is it that this *kind of Rule* in and over the Church, hath Inſtitution given it in the *Scripture*, or countenance from *Apoſtolical* Practice? Both they and we know, that no pretence of any ſuch Plea can be made: Is it, that the firſt Churches after the Apoſtles, or the Primitive Church, did find ſuch a *kind of Rule* to be neceſſary, and therefore erected it among themſelves? There is nothing more remote from Truth. Would they perſwade us, that as *Miniſters* of the Goſpel, and ſuch as have, or may have the care of particular Churches committed unto us, that we have no ſuch concernment in theſe things, but what we may ſolemnly renounce, and leave them wholly to the mannagement of others? We are not able to believe them. The Charge that is given unto us, the Account that will be required of us, the nature of the Office we are called unto, continually *teſtifie* other things unto us. Wherefore we dare not *voluntarily* engage into the neglect or omiſſion of this Duty, which Chriſt requireth at our hands, and of whoſe neglect we ſee ſo many ſad Conſequents and Effects. The Lord Chriſt, we know hath the ſame *Thoughts*, and makes the ſame Judgment of his Churches, as he did of old, when he made a ſolemn *Revelation* and Declaration of them: And then we find that he charged the *Failings*, Neglects.

lects, and Miſcarriages of the Churches principally upon the *Angels* or Miniſters of them. And we would not willingly by our neglect, render our ſelves obnoxious unto his Diſpleaſure, nor betray the Churches whereunto we do relate, unto his juſt indignation, for their declenſion from the Purity of his Inſtitutions, and the vigour of that Faith and Love, which they had profeſſed. We ſhould moreover by the *Conformity* required of us, and according to the Terms on which it is propoſed, engage our ſelves againſt the exerciſe of our *Miniſterial Office* and *Power*, with reſpect unto them who are already Members of Particular Churches. For this we carry along with us, that by *Conforming* we voluntarily conſent unto the whole *ſtate of Conformity*, and unto all that we are to do, or not to do, by the Law thereof. Now it is not to be expected, that all who are duly *initiated* or joyned unto any Church, ſhall always walk blameleſs according unto the *Evangelical Rule* of obedience, without giving offence unto others. The ſtate of the Church, is not like to be ſo *bleſſed* in this World, that all who belong unto it ſhould be conſtantly and perpetually inoffenſive. This indeed is the *Duty* of all, but it will fall out otherwiſe. It did ſo amongſt the *Primitive Churches* of old, and is not therefore otherwiſe to be expected amongſt us, on whom the ends of the world are come, and who are even preſſed with the Decayes and Ruines of it. Many *Hypocrites* may obtain an

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admiſſion into Church Societies, by the ſtricteſt Rules that any can proceed upon therein: And theſe after they have *known* and profeſſed the wayes of *Righteouſneſs*, may, and often do turn *aſide from the holy Commandment delivered unto them*, and fall again into the Polutions of the world. Many *good men*, and really ſincere Believers, may through the power of Temptations, be ſurprized into *faults* and ſins, ſcandalous to the Goſpel, and offenſive to the whole Congregation, whereof they are Members. Hath the Lord Chriſt appointed no *Relief* in and for his Churches in ſuch Caſes; no *way* whereby they may *clear* themſelves from a participation in ſuch impieties, or deliver themſelves from being looked on as thoſe who give countenance unto them, as they who continue in this Communion may and ought to be; no *Power* whereby they may put forth from among them, the *old Leaven* which would otherwiſe infect the whole; no way to diſcharge themſelves and their *Societies* of ſuch Perſons as are impenitent in their Sins? No *Means* for the awakening, conviction, Humiliation, and Recovery of them that have offended; no *way* to declare his Mind and Judgment in ſuch Caſes, with the Sentence that he denounceth in Heaven againſt them that are impenitent? If he hath done none of theſe things, it is evident, that no *Churches* in this world can poſſibly be preſerved from diſorder and Confuſion. Nor can they by Love and the Fruits of an holy Communion,

1 Cor. 5. 1,6,7.
2 Cor. 2. 6.
2 Cor. 7. 11.
Mat. 16. 18.
Mat. 18. 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20,
Rev. 2 2.

nion, be kept in ſuch a condition, as wherein he can be pleaſed with them, or continue to *walk among ſt them*: For let men pleaſe themſelves whilſt they will, with the *Name of the Church*, it is no otherwiſe with them, where Perſons *Obſtinately and impenitently wicked*, and whoſe Lives are wholly diſcrepant from the Rule of the Goſpel, are ſuffered to abide without controll. But if he hath made the Proviſion enquired after in this Caſe, as it is evident that he hath; both the *Authority* he hath granted unto his Church for theſe Ends, his Commands to exerciſe it with Care and Watchfulneſs, with the Rules given them to proceed by, with the known End of all Inſtituted Churches for the Promotion of Holineſs, being all open and plain in the Scripture; it muſt then be enquired, unto whom this Truſt is *firſtly committed*, and of whom theſe Duties are principally required.

For *Private Members* of the Church, what is their Duty, and the way how they may regularly attend unto the Diſcharge of it according to the Mind of Chriſt, in caſe of ſcandalous Sins and Offences among them, they are ſo plainly and particularly laid down and directed, as that ſetting aſide the Difficulties that are caſt on the Rule herein, by the extreamly *forced* and *unproveable exceptions* of ſome intereſted Perſons; that none can be ignorant of what is required of them, *Mat.* 18. *v.* 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20. And a Liberty to diſcharge their *Duty* herein, they are bound

by the Law of Chriſt in due Order to provide for. If they are abridged hereof, and deprived thereby of ſo great a Means of their *own Edification*, as alſo of the uſefulneſs required in them towards the *Church*, whereof they are Members, it is a ſpiritual Oppreſſion that they ſuffer under. And where it is voluntarily neglected by them, not only the Guilt of their own, but of *other Mens ſins* alſo lies upon them. Neither is their own Guilt ſmall herein; For *ſuffering ſin to abide on a Brother* without reproof, is a fruit of *hatred* in the Interpretation of the *Law*; and this hatred is a ſin of an heynous Nature, in the ſenſe of the *Goſpel*. The Duty alſo of the *whole Church* in ſuch Caſes is no leſs evidently declared. For from ſuch Perſons as walk diſorderly, and refuſe to reform, on due Admonition, they are to *withdraw*, and to *put from among ſt them* ſuch obſtinate Offenders; as alſo previouſly thereunto, to *watch* diligently leaſt any root of *bitterneſs ſpring up among* them, whereby they might be defiled. And hereunto alſo are ſubſervient all the Commands that are given them to *exhort* and *admoniſh* one another, that the whole Church may be preſerved in Purity, Order, Holineſs and Faithfulneſs. But the chief enquiry is, with whom reſts the *Principal Care* and Power, according to the Mind of Chriſt, to ſee the *Diſcipline* of the Church in Particular Congregations exerciſed, and to exerciſe it accordingly. If this ſhould be found to be in the

Lev. 19. 17.
1 *Joh.* 2. 9, 10. & 3. 15.

Miniſters,

Miniſters, and through their neglect in the Adminiſtration of it, Offenders be left in their ſins and Impenitency, without a due Application of the means for their *Healing* and Recovery; if the Church its ſelf come to be corrupted thereby, and to fall under the *Diſpleaſure of Jeſus Chriſt*; as theſe things, in one Degree or other, more or leſs will enſue on that neglect, it will not turn unto their *Comfortable Account* at the great Day. That this is their Duty, that this *Authority* and *Inſpection* is committed unto them, the Reaſons before inſiſted on, in the Caſe of *Admiſſion*, do undeniably evince. And if thoſe Miniſters who do *Conſcientiouſly* attend unto the Diſcharge of their Miniſterial Office towards particular Flocks, would but examine their *own hearts* by the Light of open and plain Scripture Teſtimonies, with the Nature of their *Office*, and of the work they are ingaged in, there would need little arguing to convince them, of what Truſt is committed unto them, or what is required from them. If the Conſciences of others are not concerned in theſe things, if they have no Light into the Duty which ſeems to be incumbent on them, their Principles and Practices, or as we think miſtakes and neglects, can be no Rule unto us. What we may be *forbidden*, what we may be hindred in, is of another Conſideration. But for us *voluntarily* to ingage unto the Omiſſion of that Duty, which we cannot but believe that it will be required of us, is an

Evil which we are every way obliged to avoid.

There are alſo ſundry *Particular Duties*, relating unto theſe that are more general, which in like manner, on the Terms of Communion propoſed unto us, muſt be foregone and omitted. And where by theſe means or neglects ſome of the Principal ways of Exerciſing *Church Communion* are caſt out of the Church, ſome of the means of the Edification of its Members are wholly loſt, and ſundry Duties incumbent on them are virtually prohibited unto them, untill they are utterly grown into diſuſe, it is no wonder if in ſuch Churches where theſe Evils are inveterate and Remedileſs, *Particular Perſons* do peaceably provide for their own Edification by joyning themſelves unto ſuch Societies as wherein the Rule of the Goſpel is more practically attended unto. It is taken for granted that the Church is not corrupted by the *wicked Perſons* that are of its Communion; nor its Adminiſtrations defiled by their Preſence and Communication in them; nor the Edification of others prejudiced thereby, becauſe it hath been ſo ſaid by ſome of the *Ancients*; though whether ſuitably unto the Doctrine of the *Apoſtles* or no, is very queſtionable. But ſuppoſe this ſhould be ſo; yet where *wicked Perſons* are admitted, without Diſtinction or Diſcrimination, unto the Communion of the Church where they are *tollerated* therein, without any procedure with them, or againſt them,

1 *Cor.* 5. 6, 9, 10. 2 *Theſſ.* 3. 6.

them, contrary to expreſs Rules of the Scripture given to that purpoſe; ſo that thoſe who are really *Pious* among them can by no means prevail for the Reformation of the whole, they may, not only without breach of Charity, impairing of Faith or Love, or without the leaſt ſuſpition of the Guilt of *Schiſm*, forſake the Communion of ſuch a Congregation, to joyn unto another, where there is more Care of Piety, Purity, and Holineſs; but if they have *any Care* of their own Edification, and a *due Care* of their Salvation, they will underſtand it to be their Duty ſo to do.

And we may a little touch hereon once for all. The General End of the Inſtitution of Churches, as ſuch, is the viſible manmagement of the *Enmity* on the part of the *ſeed of the Woman*, Chriſt the Head, and the Members of his Body myſtical, againſt the *Serpent* and his Seed. In the purſuit of this End, God ever had a Church in the world, *ſeparate* from perſons openly profane, doing the work of the Devil their Father. And there is nothing in any Church Conſtitution, which tends unto, or is compliant with, the *mixing* and reconciling theſe diſtinct ſeeds, whilſt they are ſuch, and viſibly appear ſo to be. And therefore as the *Types*, *Prophecies* and Promiſes of the Old Teſtament, did declare that when all things were actually *brought unto an Head* in Chriſt Jeſus, the Churches and all things that belong unto it ſhould be *Holy*; that is, viſibly

*Iſa.*26.2. *Ezek.*43. 12. *Chap.*44. 9. *Levit.* 11.44. *Rom.*1.6. 1 *Cor.* 1. 1,2. *Chap.*12. 13. *Phil*1.4 *Col.*2.11. 2 *Tim.* 2. 22. *Ezek*44. 1. 1 *Cor.* 5. 6. *Heb.* 12. 15,16.

ſo; ſo the Deſcription generally, and uniformally given us of the Churches of the *New Teſtament*, when actually called and erected, is, that they conſiſted of Perſons *called, ſanctified, juſtified, ingrafted into Chriſt*; or Saints, Believers, faithful ones, purified and ſeparate unto God. Such they profeſſed themſelves to be, ſuch they were judged to be by them that were concerned in their Communion; and as ſuch they ingage themſelves to walk in their Converſation. By what Authority ſo great a *Change* ſhould be now wrought in the Nature and Conſtitution of Churches, that it ſhould be altogether indifferent of what ſort of perſons they do conſiſt, we know not. Yea, to ſpeak plainly, we greatly fear that both the Worſhip and Worſhipers are defiled, where open impenitent ſinners are freely admitted unto all ſacred Adminiſtrations, without controul. And we are ſure, that as God complaineth that his *Sanctuary is polluted*, when there are brought into it, *ſtrangers uncircumciſed in heart, and uncircumciſed in fleſh*; ſo the true Members of the Church are warned of the Evil and dangers of ſuch defiling mixtures, and charged to watch againſt them,

We might yet further inſiſt on the great evil it would be in us, if we ſhould give a *ſeeming outward Approbation* unto thoſe things, and their uſe, which we cannot but condemn, and deſire to have removed out of the Worſhip of God. And moreover, there is, as we believe, an Obligation upon us, to give a

Teſtimony

Teſtimony unto the Truth about the Worſhip of God, in his Church, and not abſolutely to hide the Light we have received therein *under a Buſhel*. Nor would we render the Reformation of the Church abſolutely hopeleſs, by our profeſſed compliance with the Things that ought to be reform'd. But what hath been pleaded already is ſufficient to manifeſt, that there neither is, nor can be a *Guilt of Schiſm* charged either on Miniſters or People who with-hold themſelves from the Communion of that Church, or thoſe Churches, whereof the things mentioned are made *Conditions* neceſſary and indiſpenſible; and wherein they muſt be denyed the Liberty of performing many Duties made neceſſary unto them by the Command of Jeſus Chriſt. And as the rigid Impoſition of *unſcriptural Conditions* of Communion, is the principal Cauſe of all the *Schiſms* and Diviſions that are among us; ſo let them be removed and taken out of the way, and we doubt not, but that among all that ſincerely profeſs the Goſpel, there may be that peace, and ſuch an Agreement obtained, as in obſervance whereof, they may all exerciſe thoſe Duties of *Love*, which the ſtricteſt Union doth require. Theſe we profeſs our ſelves *ready for*, ſo far as God ſhall be pleaſed to help us in the Diſcharge of our Duty; as alſo to renounce every Principle or Opinion whereof we may be convinced that they are in the leaſt oppoſite unto, or inconſiſtent with, the *Royal Law of Love*, and the due exerciſe

thereof. If men will continue to charge, accuſe or revile us, either out of a cauſeleſs diſtaſt againſt our perſons, or *Miſunderſtanding of our Principles* and wayes, or upon uncertain *Reports*, or meerly prompted thereunto, through a vain elation of mind ariſing from the Diſtance wherein, through their Secular Advantages, they look upon us to ſtand from them; as we cannot help it, ſo we ſhall endeavour not to be greatly moved at it: For it is known, that this hath been the Lot and Portion of thoſe who have gone before us, in the Profeſſion of the Goſpel, and *ſincere endeavors* to vindicate the Worſhip of God from the Diſorders and Abuſes that have been introduced into it; and probably will be theirs who ſhall come after us. But the whole of our care is, that *in godly ſimplicity and ſincerity we may have our converſation in the World*, not *corrupting the Word of God*, nor *uſing our Liberty as a cloak of maliciouſneſs, but as becomes the Servants of God.*

But perhaps it will yet be pleaded, that this is not the whole which we are charged withall: For it is ſaid that we do not *only withdraw our ſelves from the communion of the Church of* England, *but alſo that we aſſemble in ſeparate Congregations for the Celebration of the whole Worſhip of God*; whereby we evidently make a Diviſion in the Church, and contract unto our ſelves the guilt of Schiſm; For what can there be more required thereunto. But what would thoſe who make uſe of this Objection

have

have us to do? would they have us *ſtarve* our ſouls, by a wilful neglect of the means appointed for their nouriſhment? Or would they have us live in a conſtant omiſſion of all the Commands of Chriſt? By them, or thoſe whoſe Cauſe they plead, we are *caſt out* and excluded from Church Communion with them, by the *unſcriptural Conditions* of it which they would force upon us. The Diſtance between us that enſues hereon, they are the *Cauſes* of, not we; for we are ready to joyn with them, or any others, upon the Terms of Chriſt and the Goſpel. And do they think it meet that we ſhould revenge *their fault* upon our ſelves, by a voluntary abſtinence from all the wayes and means of our edification? Doth any man think that Jeſus Chriſt leaves any of his Diſciples unto ſuch a condition, as wherein it is impoſſible they ſhould *obſerve his Commands* and Inſtitutions without ſin? That we ſhould joyn in ſome Societies, that in them we ſhould aſſemble together for the worſhip of God in him, and that we ſhould in them *do and obſerve whatever he hath appointed*, we look upon as our indiſpenſible Duty, made ſo unto us by his Commands. Theſe things, ſay ſome, you ſhall not do with us, if you will do no more; and if you do them among your ſelves, you are *Schiſmaticks*. But this is a ſeverity, which we know we ſhall not meet with at the laſt Day. *We ſtand at the Judgment Seat of Jeſus Chriſt.*

It

It will, it may be, be demanded, by what *Warrant or Authority* we do aſſemble our ſelves in Church Societies for the Adminiſtration of Goſpel Ordinances; and who gave us this Authority? VVe anſwer, That it is acknowledged there is a *Difference* between them and us, ſo that with them we cannot enjoy the VVorſhip of God. But of this Difference we are not the *Cauſe*, nor do give occaſion to any blameable Diviſions, by our Principles or Practiſes. VVhere the Cauſe is found, there the guilt remains. This being the ſtate of things with us, it is fond to imagine that any Profeſſors of the Goſpel do abſolutely want a *Warranty or Authority* to obey Jeſus Chriſt, to obſerve his Commands, and to ſerve him according to his revealed VVill. His *Command in his Word*, his Promiſe of the acceptance of them, and of his preſence among them, in all the Acts of their holy obedience; the aſſiſtance and guidance of his holy Spirit, which he affords graciouſly unto them; are a ſufficient *Warranty and Authority* for what they do in expreſs complyance with his Commands, and more they will not plead a power for. VVhere the *Spirit* and *Word* of Chriſt are, there is his Authority. And this is no otherwiſe committed unto men, but to enable them to act *obedientially* towards him, and *Miniſterially* towards others. And were Church Actings conſidered more with reſpect unto the *Obedience* that in them is performed unto Chriſt, which is their firſt and principal Conſideration,

on, it would quickly be evident whence men might have *Authority* for their performance, And by the ſame means are we directed in their Order and Manner. Beſides the *Miniſters* who go before the people in their Aſſemblies, are all of them (ſo far as we know) ſolemnly ſet apart unto their Office and VVork, according unto what Chriſt hath appointed; and their Duty it is, to teach unto all men the good wayes of Chriſt, and to go before them who are convinced and perſwaded by them, in their practiſe. Theſe things hath their *Lord and Maſter* required of them, and an account concerning them will he call them unto at the laſt Day. *A Diſpenſation is committed unto them*, and a neceſſity is thence incumbent on them to preach the Goſpel; and who ſhall excuſe them if they neglect ſo to do? For that all thoſe who are Miniſters of the Goſpel, are called to preach the Goſpel, and that diligently; every one, according as he hath received the *Gift of the Grace of God*; is out of queſtion with them that do beleive the Goſpel: And of the *Stewardſhip* which is committed unto them herein, are they to give an *Account*. And we do know that it is a *fearful thing* for ſinners, that is, wilful neglecters of his Commands, to *fall into the hands of the living God*. Our Lord Jeſus Chriſt alſo hath teſtified beforehand, that he who *ſetteth his hand to this Plough, and looks back again*, is not fit for the Kingdome of God. He alone who calls them to this work, can diſcharge them of it;

it; and that either by the Rule of his Word, or his Providence. And when men are invincibly hindred, as many are at this day, it is their ſuffering, but not their ſin. Otherwiſe none can *abſolve them* from the Duty they owe to Jeſus Chriſt in this matter; and that *Debt* which they owe to the Souls of men, in undertaking the work of the Miniſtry. Some indeed ſuppoſe, or pretend to ſuppoſe, that a Prohibition given them by *Superiors*, forbidding them to preach, though not by, nor according unto any Rule of the Goſpel, doth diſcharge them from any Obligation ſo to do, that it ſhall be no more their Duty. It would do ſo no doubt, had they received no other command to preach the Goſpel, nor from any other Authority, than that of and from thoſe *Superiors* by whom they are forbidden. But being perſwaded that they have ſo from him who is *higher than the higheſt*, they cannot acquieſce in this Diſcharge, nor being *bought with a price*, can they now *be Servants of men*. But by whom are they thus forbidden to preach? It will be ſuppoſed, that the Church which differs from them, and which originally makes it ſelf a *part* in theſe Differences, by the conditions of communion which it would impoſe upon them, is no competent Judge in this caſe: Nor will their Prohibitions, who apparently thereby revenge their own Quarrel, influence the Conſciences of them that diſſent from them. For we ſpeak not of what *will* or may take

place;

place; but what the *Conſciences of men* will or may be concerned in. By the Civil Magiſtrate they are not forbidden to preach, that we know of: It is true, they are prohibited to preach in the *Legal Publick Meeting Places* or Churches; and theſe places being in the power and care of the Magiſtrate, it is meet his *Terms and conditions* of their uſe ſhould be accepted of, or his Prohibition obſerved, or his Penalty quietly undergone, where a peaceable occaſion is made uſe of contrary unto it. As to other places, Miniſters are not *abſolutely forbid to preach* in them; no ſuch power is as yet aſſumed or exerciſed: Only the *Manner of Aſſemblies* for Sacred Worſhip, and the *Number* of them that may aſſemble, are regulated by Laws for Secular Ends, or Civil Security; and that under expreſs Penalties incurred on a contrary practice. But the Conſciences of *Miniſters* cannot be concerned in ſuch Laws, ſo far as to be exempted by them from the Obligation that lies upon them from the *command of Chriſt* to preach the Goſpel. This they are commanded by him to do, and others know the *penalties* from men, under the danger whereof they muſt attend unto them. Beſides the reaſon of theſe *Legal Prohibitions*, ſo far as they do extend, are taken, from Civil conſiderations alone; namely, of the Peace and quiet of the Nation; and not from any Scripture or Religious Rules. And were theſe Prohibitions only *temporary*, or occaſional, ſuited

ſuited unto ſuch Emergencies as may give countenance unto their neceſſity, there might be a proportionable compliance with them. But whereas they reſpect *all times alike*, it is no doubt incumbent on them, who act any thing contrary unto ſuch *Prohibitions*, to ſecure their own Conſciences, that they no way interfere with the Intention and End of the Law, by giving the leaſt countenance or occaſion unto *civil diſturbances*; and others alſo, by their peaceable deportment in all they do. But whereas they have received a *Talent* from the Lord Chriſt to *trade* withal, have accepted of his Terms, and engaged into his Service, without any condition of exception in caſe of ſuch Prohibitions, it is not poſſible they ſhould ſatisfie their Conſciences in deſiſting from their work on ſuch Occurrences, any farther than in what they muſt yield unto outward force and neceſſity. It is pretended by ſome, that if ſuch a *Legal Prohibition* were given unto all the Miniſters of the Gospel, it would not be obligatory unto them: For if it ſhould be ſo eſteemed, it were in the power of any *Supream Magiſtrate lawfully* to forbid the whole work of Preaching the Goſpel unto his Subjects; which is contrary to the Grant made by God the Father, unto Jeſus Chriſt, that *all Nations ſhould be his Inheritance*; and the Commiſſion he gave thereon unto his Apoſtles to *teach all Nations*, and to *preach the Goſpel to every creature* under heaven. But it being *ſome* only that are concerned in this

this Prohibition, it is their duty for Peace ſake, to acquieſce in the will of their *Superiors* therein, whilſt there are others ſufficient to carry on the ſame work. That Peace is or may be ſecur'd on other Terms, hath been already declared: But that *one mans Liberty* to attend unto his Duty, and his doing it accordingly, ſhould excuſe another from that which is *perſonally* incumbent on himſelf, is a matter not eaſily apprehended, nor can be readily digeſted. Beſides, what is pretended of the *ſufficient number of Preachers* without any contribution of aid from the *Non-conformiſts*, is indeed but pretended: For if all that are found in the Faith, gifted, and called to the work of the *Miniſtry* in theſe Nations, were equally encouraged unto, and in their work, yet would they not be able to anſwer the neceſſities of the Souls of men, requiring an attendance unto it, in a due meaſure and manner; And thoſe who have exerciſed themſelves unto *compaſſionate thoughts* towards the multitudes of poor Sinners in theſe Nations, will not be otherwiſe minded. Wherefore theſe things being premiſed, we ſhall ſhut up theſe Diſcourſes, with a brief Anſwer unto the foregoing Objection which was the occaſion of them. And we ſay;

1. That *Schiſm* being the Name of a Sin, or ſomewhat that is evil; it can in no Circumſtances be any maes Duty, But we have manifeſted, as ſatisfactorily unto our own Conſciences, ſo we hope unto the minds of unpre-

prejudiced perſons, that in our *preſent condition*, our Aſſemblies for the Worſhip of God, are our expreſs Duty, and ſo can have no Affinity with any ſin or evil. And thoſe who intend to charge us with *Schiſme*, in or for our Aſſemblies, muſt firſt prove them not to be our Duty.

2. Notwithſtanding them, or any thing by us performed in them, we do preſerve our communion entire with the *Church of England* (that is, all the viſible Profeſſors of the Goſpel in this Nation) as it is a part of the *Catholick Church*, in the Unity of the Faith owned therein, provided it be not meaſured by the preſent Opinions of ſome, who have evidently departed from it. Our *Non-admittance* of the preſent Government and Diſcipline of the Church, as apprehended National, and as it is in the hands of meerly *Eccleſiaſtical perſons*, or ſuch as are pretended ſo to be, we have accounted for before. But we are *One* with the whole Body of the Profeſſors of the Proteſtant Religion, in a publick avowment of the ſame Faith. β.

3. Into *Particular Churches* we neither are, nor can be admitted, but on thoſe terms and conditions, which not only we may juſtly, but which we are bound in a way of Duty to refuſe. And this alſo hath been pleaded before. Beſides, no man is ſo obliged unto communion with any *Particular or Parochial Church* in this Nation, but that it is in his own power at any time to relinquiſh it,

and

and to ſecure himſelf alſo from all Laws which may reſpect that communion, by the removal of his Habitation. It is therefore evident that we never had any relation unto any *Parochial Church*, but what is Civil and Arbitrary, a relinquiſhment whereof is practiſed at pleaſure every day, by all ſorts of men. Continuing therefore in the conſtant Profeſſion of the ſame Faith, with all other *Proteſtants in the Nation*, and the whole Body thereof, as united in the Profeſſion of it under one Civil or Political Head; and having antecedently no *Evangelical Obligation* upon us unto Local communion in the ſame Ordinances of Worſhip *numerically* with any particular or *Parochial Church*; and being prohibited from any ſuch communion by the Terms, Conditions and Cuſtomes indiſpenſibly annexed unto it, by the Laws of the Land, and the Church, which are not lawful *for us to obſerve*, being Chriſts Freemen: It being moreover our duty to aſſemble our ſelves in Societies for the Celebration of the Worſhip of God in Chriſt, as that which is expreſly commanded; we are abundantly ſatisfied, that however we may be *cenſured*, judged, or condemned by men, in and for what we do; yet that he doth both *accept* us here, and will acquit us hereafter, whom we ſerve and ſeek in all things to obey. Wherefore we are not convinced that any *Principle* or practice which we own or allow, is in any thing contrary to that *Love*, Peace, and Unity,

which the Lord Chriſt requireth to be kept and preſerved among his Diſciples, or thoſe that profeſs Faith in him, and Obedience unto him according to the Goſpel. We know not any thing in them but what is conſiſtent and compliant with that *Evangelical Union*, which ought to be in, and among the Churches of Chriſt, the terms whereof we are ready to hold and obſerve, even with them that in ſundry things differ from us; as we ſhall endeavour alſo to exerciſe all Duties of the ſame Love, Peaceableneſs, and Gentleneſs, towards them by whom we are hated and reviled.

FINIS.

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Folio.

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